

# SMITH'S

MAGAZINE

JANUARY 1921

15 CENTS



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**Razor**

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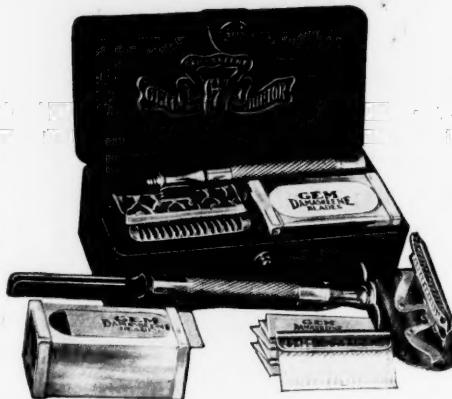
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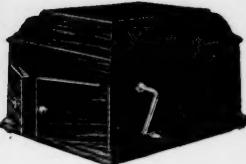
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Vol. XVI

No. 4

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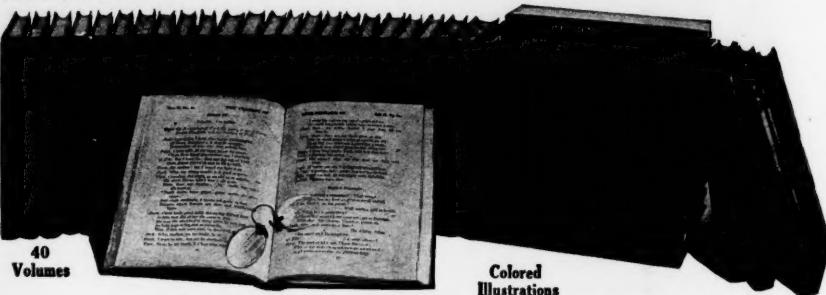
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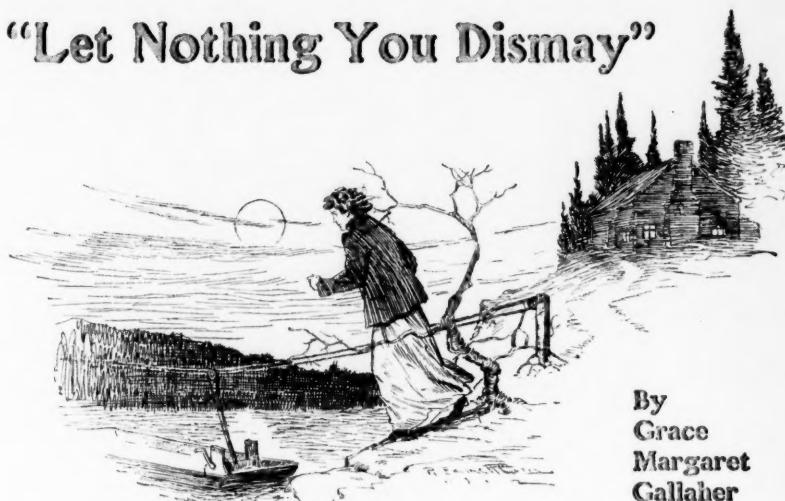
# SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 16

JANUARY, 1913

NUMBER 4

## "Let Nothing You Dismay"



By  
Grace  
Margaret  
Gallaher

Author of "The End of the Journey," "Sinners All," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

THIN moonbeams, darkened every few moments by quick-flying clouds, shivered across the floor; the wind sighed like a tired old man, too spent for loud-voiced complaints; the gush of the river over the rocks beat up into the night; and away off in the mountains a timber wolf howled a long, mournful note like the keening at a grave. Minette stirred the fire to a flare of heat and light, and pulled her chair close into the warmth of it, where she could see to knit. She had oil enough for the lamp, but she could not make herself light it, probably that she might not see the shadows creep, creep out of the corners of the room. She longed to shatter the queer stillness of the cabin, but her lips clung together

dryly, she could not force them apart, and when old Rock groaned in his sleep and young Dan barked shrilly, she jerked in every nerve. A waver of light on the windowpanes threw a grotesque image out before her eyes, till she shut them under their fluttering lids. —

It was not fear that flowed like chill water through her veins—for she had stayed alone before when her father was at the Corners—but an eerie sense of coming events. She had known it other times, the wild night when horse thieves ran off the stock, and the dim dawn when granny died. What followed fast upon the trail of her life? Would it spring upon her while she was thus alone, or was it yet in the unborn days? "Now, let it be now!" she

prayed inwardly, her hands pressed hard against each other; this caught breath of waiting grew intolerable.

With a twist of the screw of her courage, she stood up, found her yarn, and began to knit with brisk fingers. Yet, when young Dan came to rub his head on her knee, her hands trembled on his head, and her throat closed over any words of caressing. And there were twelve hours yet to daylight!

After ages on ages of silence and waning moonlight, the clock struck eight. She had been tranced for an hour, knitting, knitting as if she were some fate that fashioned thus in the house of night the web of men's lives. It was bedtime, but could she lie awake watching the fire darken to ashes, and feeling the silence grow around her like a thick, smothering shroud? What was that? Some creature moving outside, or only the stir of the blood in her own brain? She brushed a strand of hair from her forehead, and her hand was ice. Eleven hours yet to daylight!

Old Lentz, at Lucky Pocket, had lived alone year after year, and gone mad of it. She set her teeth in her lip and found it quivering. Nonsense! She couldn't go lost-witted in just one night, not if she sat by the fire knitting for ten whole hours more. She stiffened herself in her chair with resolution, and knew all her body a-tremble. Old Rock thudded over to her, crowded in against her other knee. Did the dogs feel the wind of the unknown blowing upon them from the void places of the earth? They could see and hear what human beings couldn't, sometimes. She wondered, in a wild surmise, if she should run out into the barn with the horses and cows, munching and blowing over their suppers, would she feel warm and quiet again? But suppose wise Pete should snort and roll his great eyes at something just behind her shoulder? She covered her eyes with her chill fingers and prayed with the passion of an exorcist caught in the net of some dark enchantment.

The strong blast of a horn blared out in the stillness, as if some knight of

fairy legend had winded his bugle. Instantly the spell of terror broke, the gloomy hours of night and loneliness changed into a cheerful cabin, the tranced maiden stepped out a brisk girl lighting a lamp, and the gytrash hounds, of goblin fame, to lustily barking house dogs.

Minette flung on a coat, whistled the dogs, and, without waiting to get a lantern, set off on a run down the path. The bank rose steep and sharp above the river; close under tall pines the cabin crowned its top; the lamp's thin rays slanted down through the branches a beam like a far-away star.

She untied a scow moored to the shore and, bending and rising over the crank of a windlass, drove the boat along on an overhead wire. The stream, though deep, was narrow, the voyage across short, and, as the moon sailed clear of the wrack, she saw a man stamping impatiently on the other bank, and, behind him, neck stretched, head hanging, a horse.

"Hurry up, ferryman!" called a bold voice. "I'm pretty near beat out hitting the trail." Then, as he half made out her small figure, "Sent a boy, eh? Here, let me give a hand, sonny, to help jog things along."

Minette, reversing the windlass, heard him lead his horse on board, the animal limping heavily. She was not at all troubled by this passenger, for, although late in the year for travelers by the ferry trail, she had often before ferried men across; on the contrary, her heart sang with the joy of a comrade, even a stranger one, after the bleak hours.

"You folks'll have to be tavern keepers as well as ferrymen," the stranger went on, with a laugh light as water rippling in the sunshine. "My horse's played out on me."

Minette did not speak till she had reached the landing. "Here's a lantern." She started at once for the house. "Our stable's up there," her voice fluttered down to him sweetly.

The man swung the lantern high. "George! It's a girl!"

"There's hay in the stable. I'm go-

ing to cook you up some supper," the words came faintly now.

Minette flew about the cabin in a passion of hospitality. Nothing was too good for this stranger, who had saved her from the horror of great darkness.

"Well, now," cried the passenger, as he stepped into the room scarlet-warm with fire, "this looks pretty good to me."

He cast off his coat, shaking it free from the first flakes of the storm, and stretched his hands to the blaze. Minette threw him one swift, all-compassing glance. He was just a tall, limber boy, in a flannel shirt and mired boots. But such a boy! The very soul of youth—its fire, its courage, and its hope—thrilled in his bold voice, jested on his red lips, flashed in his brilliant eyes. Minette, unused to any men but a few gnarled old trappers or worn miners, colored a lovely rose all over her face at the shining of this young godling within her meek cabin.

The boy's quick glance caught the color, he drew in his breath in a faint whistle; then he, too, reddened under his tan, and they stood, a couple of children, in happy bashfulness. Who could look to find, in a rough cabin on a lonely trail, a girl like this, slender as a reed, her head crowned with thick, bright hair, and, in the small, delicate oval of her face, eyes like clear pools of light up through which shone a soul of purity and innocence.

"You here all alone?" The boy broke the silence, his bold voice softening like his gaze.

"I am to-night. Father's down to the Corners. Him an' me live here together." Her voice had a sweet gravity.

"He be back soon?"

"Not till day after to-morrow. It's sixty miles to the Corners."

"You by yourself all night!" he exclaimed. "Have you ever done it before?"

"Oh, my, yes, ever so many times since I been grown up." She looked alluringly childish as she said this. "Father used to take me 'long with him, an' have a neighbor upstream fodder the stock, but the neighbor's moved off, an' so I stay."

The boy's glance roamed to the rifle above the fireplace. "You shoot?"

"No." She smiled like a little, grave woman. "There ain't much to shoot, nowadays, but deer an' birds, an' I don't want to kill them."

"They might come for your money?" He cast vaguely about him as if seeking the hiding place of the family treasure.

"The deer?" She laughed out a golden bubble of sound, then, as if shy of her own mirth, said soberly: "I guess you must be real hungry. I'll get you your supper."

"I'll have to ask you to help me a minute first." He stopped her with his engaging smile. "I had a spill back on the trail; I'm not much to brag of yet as a rider"—he reddened shamefacedly—"and I hurt my hand. Can you wrap it up for me?"

A lean, muscular left hand stretched itself to her, the palm jagged with a deep cut.

"Oh," breathed Minette, in tender sympathy, "you sit right down an' I'll fix it up good. I doctor all the animals when they hurt 'em."

Kneeling beside him, she cleanly and skillfully washed and bound up the hurt. The two dogs sniffed about the stranger, to find, by their own secret tests, if he were trustworthy; that decided, they laid their heads on his knee, for him to stroke.

"You haven't any brothers or sisters?"

"Just father."

"And your mother?"  
"She died when I was a baby. Granny raised me, but she died, too, a good while back."

"You born out here?" he persisted, in his easy, good-natured way.

"Right in this very room." Minette felt no resentment of his curiosity; it seemed just kind. "But my folks lived in New England for, oh, hundreds o' years, I guess."

"I guess so, too," laughed the boy, to whom everything seemed food for mirth. "I couldn't see where it worked in, that good old Yankee twang out here on the frontier. I've got some of that same blood myself, mixed in with a



*"Hurry up, ferryman! I'm pretty near beat out hitting the trail."*

Maryland and Pennsylvania brew.  
Aren't you ever scared, all alone?"

"No, never," decidedly; then, her innocent eyes raised to his, in a falter of confession: "Only just to-night, seemed like I'd go crazed with the stillness. You were real welcome!" She smiled at him with adorable shyness.

"Great goodness!" cried the boy, and the foolish words had the intensity of an oath, "I guess I'm glad I happened along."

"Don't you touch that bandage even if it gets real dirty," she advised him, as she sewed the last capable stitch. "Now, you shall have you some supper."

She set out a savory meal, the plain food cooked with a delicate skill, and the stranger ate—like a boy. Over his second cup of coffee, he smiled up at her.

"Mighty good supper. Like what mother used to cook."

"No." She took him literally. "Granny taught me."

He smiled more alluringly than ever; his eyes were like stars on a frosty night, flashingly bright, and his voice like wind in the sunshine. The wonder of him grew each instant.

"What is this place, anyhow?"

"Why," in a surprise that her father's fame had failed to reach him, "it's Holt's Ferry."

"And you are——"

"Minette Holt."

"Minette!" That coquettish stage name for this Una of the wilderness!

"Minerva Antoinette," she said, with her serious sweetness, "for both my grannies, but it's long for just ev'ry day."

"I should think!" laughed out the boy.

"Is it a homely name?" she questioned anxiously.

"It's a sweet name," he hastened to reassure her. "Mine's Rindle Easter-son. Now we know each other."

"You goin' up to the mines?" It

was her first question. "There's only a few workin' in 'em now."

"What mines?"

"Why, the Lost Mines. This is the upper trail to 'em. Folks mostly use the lower, now it's come winter."

The boy smiled and shrugged in his unregarding way. "I was bound for Liberty. That round here anywhere?"

"Liberty!" cried the girl, in great distress. "You're a hundred miles off the trail."

He stretched his legs out to the blazing fire in luxurious ease. "Who cares?" he flaunted. "I'm out to seek my fortune, one town's as good as another. What sort of folks are around here?"

"There ain't any folks," simply. "Jewell's ranch is upstream forty mile; an' Stevens' downstream fifty-five, an' the mines are the other side o' the mountain on the Corners, sixty mile back on the trail."

"And you stay here, a little girl like you!" His eyes rested on her in a kind of pitying admiration.

"I'm eighteen," with soft dignity.

"And I'm nineteen," he countered. "I'm worse off than you, though, I haven't even a father, not a soul in the world that's kin to me." He stood up, shook his shoulders as if throwing off a burden of loneliness, and said smartly: "I'll go see if my horse is all right."

When Rindge came back, he was white with snow. "Setting in for a regular old blizzard," he told her.

"Oh, no," the weather-wise frontier woman; "there ain't a grain o' wind; it's just a soft snowstorm."

"All the same, it's mighty cheerful in here." He looked about the cabin, humble in furnishing, but shiningly clean and bright with lamp and fire.

The girl gazed up at the tall stranger with tenderly considering eyes, as if she were his mother. The boy, reaching back into the dim places of his memory, saw a picture of the Virgin in just such another meager little dress of clear blue, and with just such soft and gentle beauty.

"You best get right to bed, now. You're beat out, I know."

The boy laughed aloud in his lusty manhood, and flung out one of his hands toward her. He meant to take her in his arms and kiss her, right beside the charmingly curved line of her lips. His hands fell back at his side. Her look had not wavered. It was just that which stopped him, the unafraid innocence of those eyes.

"Here's father's room." She opened the door into a bare, clean cupboard. "Mine's right next to it, if you want anything in the night." Again it was as if she were putting to bed a little boy who might be afraid in the dark.

He shook her small, work-hardened hand in a hearty grip, as if she had been a fellow man, and, smiling queerly, shut himself into his room. Minette banked the fire, called the dogs in with her, and undressed swiftly. But long she lay awake in the darkness, listening to the soft whisper of the snow against her window, her eyes shining, her lips murmuring each word the brilliant stranger had spoken. When at last she slept, her long bright hair loose about her face, she still smiled in her dreams.

"Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" It was with an exultant cry that Rindge Easterson stepped out of his room into the main cabin next morning.

The world around the cabin had none of the sparkle and mirth due that wonderful day. Brooded over by low-hung, sad clouds, it lay passive under the fine, wet snowflakes that steadily beat upon it.

Minette, a plate of smoking hot cakes in her hand, reddened beautifully for her guest. The stranger was washed and brushed, and all his potency of line and color glowed radiantly in him.

"Good mornin'," she told him, her heart beating so fast she could hardly say the words.

"Merry Christmas!" cried the boy again. "Ain't you going to wish me one back?"

"I guess I don't know what it is," in simple distress.

"Don't know——! What day of the month is it?"

"Why, 'long toward the end o' December, some time."

"End of December! Child, it's Christmas Day!"

Minette's lids fluttered over her eyes. "I view it you'd better eat your breakfast right quick; it ain't good cold." Her tone had a soft urgency, like a harsher woman's reproof.

They ate in the silence usual to frontier meals, but when Rindle's appetite was appeased, he broke out impetuously:

"Say, did you forget it was Christmas Day?"

"I don't know anythin' about it. You see, we live so far off from all folks we don't hear 'bout what's happenin' in the world," she defended herself gently.

"Not heard about Christmas!" The young fellow stared. Had he, in this high and far corner of the world, come upon a lovely Paynim maid? "Why, haven't you ever read the Bible, and about—Him—the—the—Lord?" he stumbled out awkwardly.

Minette's voice was a whisper. "Our Savior Jesus Christ?" she breathed.

"That's it," in tremendous relief. "Folks believe He was born on Christmas Day—December twenty-fifth, you know, this day we're in now."

"Do they?" in still wonder. "Father never told me that. I guess I never asked him."

"But you've kept Christmas, somehow—hung up your stocking, or had a Christmas tree?" he persisted, in his bewilderment that such a child should be.

"Father never told me," she repeated, "nor granny. Maybe mother would if she'd lived. An' was Christ really born right in the winter like this?"

"That's what they teach in church."

"I never went to a church. Father did, back East. But listen!" Her face grew troubled. "It says, 'There were shepherds abidin' in the field, keepin' watch over their flock by night.' How could they in winter?" She looked out into the sad, cold plain rimmed by the grim mountains.

"It's different in those countries over there, it's warm like summer all the time." Rindle's lips twisted in wry amusement that he should be backing up the churches, yet his voice was that in which he would have told the story to a child, serious, believing.

"You don't think the baby Jesus was cold in the manger, do you?" in wistful tenderness.

The boy felt something rise in his eyes that had not been there since he turned his back on his cold hearthstone long ago. "You little dearie!" he murmured. "No, no," he soothed her, "'twas warm all the year there." Then, his amazement flooding back upon him, "Don't any of your friends keep Christmas?"

"I haven't any friends. I've never seen any folks but the men I ferry 'cross the river."

This small, fair creature, fashioned sweetly for all the pretty plays of life, living in such deep loneliness! Never to have heard of Christmas!

"What do folks that keep Christmas have, then?" in flushed eagerness.

The boy hesitated. How explain the many-colored charm of that day? "They make a great celebration, religious and high old times, too."

"Father and granny had a different church from most, I guess," she said quaintly. "Father don't feel for any form or ceremonies. How celebrate?"

The boy looked off over the bleak and lonely world, stretching in unpeopled silences for miles upon miles, and, as he looked, the outer—which is sometimes the less real—world faded from his ken, and "there flashed upon that inward eye" a great room, gay with holly and mistletoe, and ablaze with the splendor of a glorious tree, candlelighted, present-ladened, around which danced two exultant little boys, while a big man laughed down upon them and a lovely woman played at the piano sweet old carols. In a gentle voice, and choosing his words, he tried to give her some faint plan of that strange and beautiful day of the year, mystically apart from all the others. "Well, you begin by going to church, and church is full of crosses, and wreaths, and



*The two dogs sniffed about the stranger, to find, by their own secret tests, if he were trustworthy.*

garlandy things, all of evergreen and red berries, you know, and the music is nice old songs—and—”

“What sort of songs?”

“Why, carols and hymns about it.” He stopped helplessly, then, in a bold tenor, like his speech, sang for her:

“God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen,  
Let Nothing You Dismay,  
For Jesus Christ, your Savior,  
Was Born on Christmas Day.”

“Oh,” she murmured, “please sing it once more!” And when he struck up again, she followed him, carrying the air in a little, clear soprano, infinitely moving.

“Then all your relations get together in some one house, and there’s a whacking, great dinner, turkey and plum pudding, and jokes, and games, and things like that. Then there’s the tree.”

“What kind o’ tree?” She leaned

across the table, her face propped up in her two small hands, her lips parted for her quick breath. By bending forward just a little, Rindle could have kissed her soft cheek, but again he would not. Was ever anything so helpless and yet so strong?

“An evergreen, dear, set up on the floor, and hung all over with pretty things to make it shine, and with presents for everybody.”

“Who puts the presents on?”

He laughed mischievously. “Santa Claus. He’s an old fellow drives across the roofs in a reindeer sled and climbs down the chimney in the night.”

She caught his fooling and bubbled out in her rare, sweet laugh; then she said without bitterness, “I never had a present.”

“Come now, on your birthday, or when your father gets home from town,

he must bring you some kind of a present, a bag of candy, or something."

"He brings me everything I send for. Father's a real kind man," in haste lest he be misjudged, "but he never brought me a present. Christmas must be lovely!"

"You bet!" cried the boy. "Everybody forgets the grudges and the meanness going round the rest of the year, and just pitches in for a swinging good time."

"Peace on earth, good will to men," she murmured, with her exquisite gentleness. "I wish I'd ever had a Christmas—just one." There was no rancor in her voice, only a soft wistfulness, but the boy struck his fist on the table mightily.

"By the Lord Harry! you shall have one right now, to-day."

"Can I? Will you make it for me?" It was like a child's faith in the miracle-working power of a grown-up.

"We'll get a tree, out there. Then I'll trim it, while you sit in a corner, for it's part of the fun to have the tree a surprise."

Minette pressed her hands together in a sort of awed delight.

"You go fodder the stock, an' I'll clear up quick. Then we can begin."

Hand and hand like children, they went out into the chill, gray storm, gathered branches of spruce and pine, and cut down a stanch little fir tree. Then Rindge trimmed it, while Minette, her back to the preparations, knitted by the window. Rindge sang, and whistled, and told stories of his own vagrant life since he had left home, of the adventures of the men he had met back on the Atlantic coast, and out on the frontier, and Minette listened, a very Desdemona to his Othello—"she loved him for the dangers he had passed; and he loved her that she did pity them. That only was the witchcraft he did use."

It was only a poor little tree, after all, although Rindge had done his resourceful best. He had popped corn and hung it in strings, had ladened the boughs with red apples, and twined the greenery in and out with Minette's

scarlet yarn, and, rummaging in the drawers, had found a sheet of gilt paper which he had cut into stars, and hearts, and various droll shapes. Then he had cut tallow candles into lengths, fitted them to paper sockets, and set them alight.

"Pretty dull show!" he muttered, as he studied his work. "Lucky for it she's never seen any other. But there's not any kind of a present for her. What's Christmas without a present, eh?"

He thrust his hands deep into his pockets and ran over his possessions. He had only the barest necessities, his pipe, tobacco, knife, pistol, and money, and his watch, a nickel one on a leather guard. As he slipped the leather through his fingers, his face reddened suddenly. He cast a swift glance at the girl to make sure her back was still turned, then he pulled up from around his neck a leather string, at the end of which hung a thin gold circle set with a diamond. He turned it toward the light, and read, "R. E. to M. H.," and a date, a quarter of a century ago. Rindge Easterson to Marion Hastings, the names of his father and his mother. His own initials and the girl's! He looked strangely at the ring as it lay on his open palm; this was all that remained to him of that gracious and beautiful home, separated from him by the many miles, still farther by the reckless years. All the rest had been sacrificed to the command of the game or the stress of need. This delicate gold band, with its drop of blazing dew, so like the frail and brilliant woman who had worn it, he had kept even in the bitterest straits. His young face, not yet set into lines of hard living, grew gentle, his dark eyes filmed. His softened glance rested on the girl by the window, that child of a touching and gentle charm, whose little brook of days, fashioned to ripple through flowery meadows under "the blue serene," had been turned aside by the grim hand of fate to flow sadly as a lonely, chill stream in a dark, rock-girt valley. The sweetness that ran in and out through the boy's fierce, wild na-

ture—gone suddenly, as suddenly leaping out in some gallant act, as the underground rivers of Greece spring out into sun-smitten beauty before the startled traveler—moved in him now.

"She shall have one Christmas present, anyhow," he murmured, and, slipping the ring from the chain, he wrote in a slashing hand:

"Rindge Easterson to Minette Holt.  
A Merry Christmas."

A breath, light as gossamer, seemed to brush his cheek, as his mother used to touch him with her delicate finger tips. "You'd like her to have it, wouldn't you?" he whispered, then swiftly he raised the ring to his lips.

He put ring and paper both in a box found in the cupboard, twisted it about with red yarn, and hung it on the tree.

Minette was as rapturous over the tree as a child over a really beautiful one; she broke her sober walk into dancing steps, she clapped her hands softly, she laughed her rare note of fun. Together they ate the popcorn, pulled the yarn from the boughs, and laughed over the gilt figures. At last she found the box hidden away in the green.

"For me?" she cried, holding it in her hand unopened. "The very first present I ever had." Her voice was awed.

"Open it!"

"I don't want to, I shan't ever feel just this way again, an' I want it to last," she cried.

He bore down her reluctance with his imperious, "Open it!"

She looked at the jewel, a blaze of fire in the dull room, then at the stranger, smiling at her with some significance in his smile she could not fathom, and the clear pools of her eyes clouded with tears, her voice quivered: "It's too beautiful, I couldn't own anythin' as lovely as that." She had no idea of the value of the stone, it was the beauty itself that appealed to her. "I'll wear it to-day, then I'll give it back to you."

"No, you won't," he told her brusquely, because his own voice was caught in his throat. "I want you to

keep it always, in memory of your first Christmas."

"See, it has writing in it." Twisting it, she read in a still wonder, "R. E. to M. H., your name an' mine." Yet she did not ask him how he came by this rare thing; why question any turn in the whole beautiful miracle?

"My father gave it to my mother before they were married."

"Oh"—she stretched it out to him quickly—"you must keep it, then!"

The boy looked at her small brown hand, the callousness of work upon it, and saw as if beside it another hand, long, slender, white; saw mistily—and could not speak, could only shake his head. Silently, he took the ring and slipped it on her finger. Her hand lay in his, pliant, unresisting. It was a pledge passed between them.

The young man came back to reality first. "Now, then, dance round the tree, that's the way!" he cried briskly, "and sing!" He dropped her little left hand, bound now with his sign, and, snatching her right, swung her round and round the tree. "Sing! sing!" he commanded.

"What song?" she panted, her slender feet, in their clumsy shoes, thumping with his.

The boy burst into a jovial Christmas carol, the dogs rushed at their heels, barking clamorously. The whole little cabin rang with noise and simmered with the dust of their measure.

"Now!" He spun her around like a top, whirled her off into a corner of the room, and sank, panting and red-faced, into a chair.

Minette dropped on to the lounge, her bright hair shaken all over her face, her head dancing as much from the wonder of this Christmas Day as from the wild steps.

"Now, I'll go tend to the stock while you get dinner," Rindge announced, with the masculine instinct to seek calmer moods in "the barn."

Minette worked with a fury of energy not to be expected from her softness. Then, in her own cupboard bedroom, she hunted in her drawers and boxes till she had found her one "best



*"It's too beautiful, I couldn't own anythin' as lovely as that."*

dress," scant, badly cut, and only cotton, but white and with a little frill that curled lovingly about her throat. She changed her coarse leather shoes for a pair of gay Indian moccasins, and hung around her neck her one ornament, a faded blue ribbon holding a locket in which was her mother's picture. She looked straight at herself in a queer old glass that distorted her face to a greenish white, and her features into caricatures of their delicate regularity. "I wish I could tell how I looked in the face," she sighed. "I wish I knew if I was pretty appearin'."

"Hurray for you!" cried the boy, in unfeigned admiration, when he came back. "Wish I could pretty myself some."

Minette's adoring eyes told him he needed no more magnetic charms. "I don't know as you call this any kind

of a Christmas dinner," was all she said with her lips.

"It's a grand one!" and he meant it, for here was fried chicken, home-baked bread, and — rare treat on the frontier — eggs and milk in a foamy custard.

He ate away steadily with his young appetite, but Minette nibbled only crumbs; her food was the nectar and ambrosia of the high gods. After dinner they played games, checkers, and double solitaire, which

Ridge taught

her with his pack of cards. When night came, they piled the fire with logs till it leaped in great tongues of flame, and, drawing close to it, and to each other, talked, in spurts of confidence, out of the rich silence of their fellowship, upon those actualities of life to the young, their plans and hopes. Wonderful castles in Spain they builded in the fiery heart of the fire, housed from the storm in the low and lonely mountain cabin.

By and by Ridge's mercurial fancy swept him back to the day. "Let's sing," he urged, "so that, when we celebrate next Christmas together, we'll know the songs," as if he lived a mile downstream, and was a weekly visitor at the cabin.

So he sang rollickingly, with a relish of his own good voice, some of the carols learned in childhood, forgotten,

and remembered again in the tender air of this girl's presence—like withered plants that bloom in the wooing of a warm rain. Minette listened in a hush that waited on each word lest it be lost; for her there was no "next Christmas," all was a marvelous, throbbing Now.

Suddenly Rindge stopped, a stave still upon his lips; then, in a queer, low voice he began to speak.

"There was a song my mother always sang Christmas night when my brother and I went to bed. It's an old German one, called 'Stille Nacht.' "

"Sing it," pleaded the girl.

"You learn it from me." The boy cast a quick glance around to be certain no other heard him than this grave little girl, and, bending till his breath stirred her hair, he sang in a voice that thrilled in a way he could not know himself,

"Silent Night, Holy Night  
All so calm, all so bright,  
Shepherds first vigils keep  
Where the Babe and Mother sleep,"

to the end of the simple, touching old hymn. The girl, in her low chair, her arms lying in her lap as if clasped around a sleeping baby, sang with him, faltering over the unfamiliar words, but carrying the air in a sweet thread of sound.

Outside, the storm had ceased; the stars, conquerors in the battle with the clouds, gleamed pale and beautiful, as the Virgin Mother shone after her travail for her Baby Son; and one white and glorious planet, as it might be the Son Himself, looked down upon the cabin.

He shook both her hands for good night in such a grasp that the diamond pricked a drop of blood upon her finger. The stone glittered in a reddened light, and Minette, with no form of words to bind the vow, pledged in that sacrament of blood the last throb of her life to this strange boy.

And in the morning he was gone! Minette could not believe that such sorrow could be in all the world. She ferried him over the river with a stricken face and icy hands. The boy pitied her

terribly, the little, dear thing, so drab of life that the light-come, light-go of a chance traveler was a sparkle of happiness.

"You and I'll keep next Christmas together, you just bet your pile on that," he told her gayly, as he leaped ashore. "Wherever I am, I'll come a-galloping along Christmas Eve the same as this year." He meant every word, too—at that moment.

Minette lifted her small, soft face and beautiful eyes, bleak now with misery unsoftened by tears, and from her lead heart murmured:

"A year's a long time."

"Oh, no, it isn't; runs by like water downstream," he comforted her out of his pity. "You smile for me, and tell me you won't forget me."

Minette did smile at the command of her king, and love and faith that a king could not buy moved on her quivering lips and deepened the light in her eyes. She was past words now, only her eyes spoke to his eyes. The boy threw the reins over his horse's head, "tying him to the ground," and stretched out his arms to her. Now, indeed, what did the most passionate caress count, here on the verge of his journey? She looked up at him, one hand hanging open at her side, the other ringed one clasped across her breast as if to hold steady the beating heart within. The boy's eager stride dropped, he took the small hand down from her heart gently, and, as tenderly as if she had been the first "M. H." who wore the ring, kissed the lips that pressed his deeply in return.

"Good-by, little dearie thing," he whispered. "We'll keep next Christmas together."

Minette stood where he left her long after the beat of his horse's feet had died away, her eyes bent upon his ring. The diamond that had burned passionately in the sun now lay dull under the drift of a cloud, but the slender circle of gold was without beginning or end, the symbol of eternity itself.

The year stole by on silent feet, long,

still days, dreamless nights, spring, summer, autumn, then Christmas.

Daniel Holt was late this year about his winter supplies, for the weather had been mild. On the thin dawn of his journey to the Corners, his daughter, pouring his coffee, spoke out the words that had sung themselves in her brain for twelve months:

"Father, did you ever hear tell o' Christmas Day?" Her voice was tranquil, her eyes calm upon him, but her breast rose in fluttering breaths like that of a spent racer.

Old Daniel was a dyed-in-the-grain New Englander, sap and bark, whom nearly half a century of the frontier had left as it had found him, untouched. He pondered the question lest he answer it unwarily, then said with caution:

"Yes, yes, darter; it comes December twenty-fifth."

"But did you ever hear o' folks celebratin' it, with trees, an' presents, an'—an'—like that?"

"We never made nothin' o' it to our house, as I can call to mind." He groped back into the far-off years. "Father, an' mother didn't hold with such doin's, they considered 'em triflin'." Minette gasped in her relief, the ground was broken for her seed.

"I want to keep it, father," she trembled out. "I want to have a tree, an' decorations on it, an' a present—a surprise one—from you."

Old Daniel stared, dumfounded. "Ye can't compass it," he told her solemnly, forgetting, in his daze, to ask how or why this sudden desire.

"I can, father, I can; I'll get the tree an' trim it an' all the rest, if you'll buy me just one present to the Corners."

If there had been any one at the ferry to hear it, the old man would have said that his daughter was "a good girl," and that he "set by her consid'ble"; in truth, he thought her the loveliest of created beings, and idolized her. So, after a laugh that creaked in his throat as if rusty from lack of such usage, he said:

"Well, Min, name what ye've set your mind on, an' if it's to the Corners, ye

shall have it. I ain't agin' such celebrations, as I know."

Minette ran around the table and flung her arms around his shoulders, grave, composed little Minette!

"It has to be a surprise present, dear," she cried, her cheek against his hair, "all wrapped up in a box for me to open Christmas Day."

Christmas Eve the wind roared around the cabin, tore at the windows, shook the wall, rattled the latches. Minette, huddling her arms in a shawl, heard shrieked in her ears a dark old hymn of her grandmother's:

"When the fierce North Wind,  
With his airy forces  
And a storm of hail,  
Comes hurling amain down."

She strove to drive it away by singing softly to herself. Then she hushed her voice to listen, her heart gripped in the power of her will to keep back the blood beating loudly in her brain. Suppose he should be out there at the ferry, blowing in vain against the furious wind! Suppose the horn had been torn off! She opened the door, and listened with taut nerves. There was no moon in the black night.

"Shut the door, child; you'll have us froze," admonished her father, waking out of a doze.

Minette cast a glance at him, drew her shawl closer, and stepped out into the storm. Stumbling, gasping, beaten by the gale, she kept the path down to the river. Louder than the storm, it bawled its fury at her. He had promised he would come next Christmas, and by the river was the only probable trail. She loosed the scow, finding the painter in the darkness by old habit, grasped the windlass, and cranked the boat the few rods across. The horn was in its place, banging against the pole.

"Rindge!" she shrieked. "Rindge! It's me, Minette. I'm here for you." Her cry shrilled above the thick roar of the storm, piercing the night.

No sound answered, voice of man, or clang of hoof. She groped her way back to the house. Her father might

wake and miss her. She had never told him a word of Rindge's strange visit; that was a secret so precious sweet she had kept it hidden deep in her heart of happiness; could she tell it now in her forlornity?

Drooping with weariness and disappointment, hope lifted her an instant at the sound of her father's voice. Perhaps Rindge had come over the mountains, after all. The old man only complained to himself of the wind.

"Min, ye act possessed, shut to that door, an' come to bed."

Obedient, the girl crept to bed, only to lie, wide-eyed, deep into the night, listening, hoping, building her house of comfort upon to-morrow.

Christmas Day dawned wild and dark; yet, as the first cold light struggled over Minette's bed, she was up with a spring, and dressing with fingers that fumbled in their eagerness over buttons and fastenings.

"Merry Christmas, father!" she called exultantly. Sleep had "knitted up the raveled sleeve of care"; she knew that Rindge was coming to-day. "Father, Merry Christmas!"

A growling sound answered through the wall; the bed creaked as old Daniel stretched his long body awake.

"Father!" she commanded. "Say Merry Christmas back to me!"

The old man put his frowsy head out of the door and grinned deprecatingly, as one who humors a silly child.

"Merry Christmas, darter!"

Minette cooked the same breakfast "he" had eaten that morning, and when her father had gone out to his "critters," began her Christmas preparations. She set up the little tree—smaller than last year, for she had cut it by herself—tying on it the apples, popcorn, and the gilt figures—misshaped images those, since she had no skill in cutting—and a package marked "Father, Merry Christmas"—knitted red mittens, his surprise. Then, when all was ready, she wrapped herself from the storm and fared out on the trail, up toward Lost Mine, down to the ferry. If Rindge were struggling toward her in the grip of the storm, she would, like

the father in the Bible story, "see him while he was yet a long way off and run to welcome him."

Slowly, yet with spirit still, she entered the stable, larger than the cabin, where the ferryman kept his few cows and horses.

"Father, you ready to come celebrate now?"

Old Daniel turned testily. "I got a sick critter out here," he admonished her. Then, perhaps because some wandering air of the great mellow wind of kindness that blows round the whole world on Christmas Day warmed his stubborn old heart, he added with mildness: "But I'll be 'long in to see what kind o' a trade ye got, pretty quick now."

"Well, now, 'tis a likely kind o' sight." He smiled upon his bright-haired daughter, more than on the tree. "You bide till I get you your Christmas surprise."

Minette smiled and blushed when she opened the great parcel, for her father, once he was stirred to it, had acted lavishly. Two new dresses were rolled in its paper. She stripped the tree, ate the popcorn, and even coaxed her fellow reveler to take some with her; then, in a little pathetic travesty of that other day's high revelry, she pattered about the tree in small, queer whirls.

Dinner was just as on that other day. Her father ate with slow relish, Minette with a heart that flagged with the failing day. Then she played checkers with her father, her fingers moving the pieces neatly, while, like a knife in her brain, cut a sharp old saying quoted by her grandmother:

Three things of which a man may die:

To lie abed and sleep not,  
To serve well and please not,  
To wait for one who comes not.

When black night had sifted down upon the cabin, and the wind, worn with raving, only muttered and groaned, Minette, like one who bravely plays a poor part to the fall of the curtain, touched her father's hand softly.

"Let's sit us close to the fire, an' talk;" then, at his stare of dazed ob-

jection, a swift inspiration helped her.  
"Tell me where you first met my mother, an' how she looked."

"Why, we growed up together, back in Maine; I always knew her." But she had touched a nerve still quick in his dull spirit, and he said gently: "You favor her more'n you do me. She was little, an' light-footed, an' fair-compled."

Very slowly, to her adroit questionings, he lifted the curtain upon his own romance, faded now from the gallant colors in which it had once been painted, but showing still traces of blue, and rose, and gold, like the dimming minia-ture of some long-ago beauty.

Minette drew a sigh from the lake of bitter waters within her heart. Had her father suffered, when he stood beside the raw new grave of his young wife, as she suffered now, who could not know where the man she loved lay dead?

Out of the silence that fell between them, she said tremulously:

"You sing me a song!"

Even upon old Daniel's placid percep-tions it began to dawn that his daughter was "actin' kind o' different," and in a dazed sympathy he answered:

"I ain't no great o' a song bird, darter, but like 'nough I can carry a tune, if you'll call one to mind."

"Don't you know one yourself—'bout Christmas?"

"No, no," with decision. "I don't cal'late there is none, neither. My father—he led the singin' to meetin' long's he lived—he used to be fond on 'Broad is the road that leads to death,' an'

"Day o' Wrath, that Dreadful Day,  
When Heaven an' Earth shall pass away,  
What Power shall be the Sinner's Stay?"

"Oh," quivered the girl, "don't you call home one pretty, happy song?"

The old man pondered, memory threading the dim aisles of long ago. "Seems as if there was one we used to sing summer Sabbaths, 'bout the flowers an' like that." His voice shook huskily, but the sweet old words and quaint tune flowed to the end:

"The Lord into His Garden comes,  
The spices yield their rich perfumes,  
The lilies grow an' thrive,  
The lilies grow an' thrive."

The girl, child of the bare, wind-swept plains, listened in a tranced vision that saw life as it was to other women, blossoming with gay and pretty occasions, perfumed with the love of children and husband.

"That's real movin', father," she whispered. "This is a Christmas hymn I know." In a voice sweet and steady, but poignant with the blight of the withered day, she sang:

"Silent Night, Holy Night,  
All so calm, all so bright."

"I guess better jog long to bed." It was her father's only comment, yet he laid his hand on her head for a moment. "Ye grow like your mother, she was a lovely character."

"Next Christmas" was gone. Minette buried her face deep in the pillows and sobbed gaspingly, in her misery.

The plains beyond Holt's Ferry stretched silver-gray under the chill, dim stars; the grim mountains glimmered in their frost coating. The pines were motionless; even the noisy river was quieted under a hand of ice; the world was hushed in a calm so deep "that nothing lived 'twixt it and silence." Slowly the stars faded out; a strange, sick light glimmered over the land; a little wind stirred the treetops and whirled the twigs snapping over the frozen earth.

A man, huddled on the floor of the ferryboat, a piece of old sail drawn over him, crawled to his feet, and, after a keen glance at the silent, smokeless cabin, began to climb the hill. He went quickly and lightly, leaving no trail on the frozen ground, yet each step was evidently a pain, for his face was clay-colored, and, in spite of the iron cold, drops of moisture beaded his forehead. He skirted the cabin widely, and crept around the stable, sheltered, like the house, by trees, till he found a small window open. Gripping the side of



*"Good-by, little dearie thing," he whispered. "We'll keep next Christmas together."*

this, he pulled himself up with a great sigh like a groan kept under, and dropped into the darkness. He waited, taut as a wire, till he was sure no loud-breathing animal was disturbed, then slipped with infinite stealth to the hay-mow. Up this he dragged himself, banked the hay in a barrier between himself and the open stable, and, sinking into its warm depths, went fast asleep.

Soon the dawn wind, "with a blow like an angel's wing," swept the rim of the eastern mountains, and at the smiting, they flung out banners of red, and

purple, and gold, heralds of the sun swinging up to his short winter march.

Now appeared another man at the ferry, jogging along on the opposite bank at the steady trot of good horse with good rider, on a long trail. He reached for the horn, blew a strong blast, waited, blew a second, then settled back patiently in the saddle to abide the ferryman.

At the sound of the horn, Minette was up and calling:

"The ferry, father!"

Old Daniel turned another corner in his dream, and answered nothing, but

his daughter's persistent, "The ferry!" woke him to a sense of disagreeable duty.

"Folks had ought to stick in bed in such outlandish weather," he mumbled, as he found his boots. "Min, put an extra dose o' coffee in the pot, whosom-ever it may be'll stay to breakfast."

Minette was already at work. She seemed always the same girl, candid of glance, tender of voice, all innocence and gentleness; yet in the carriage of her head, the movement of her body, there was a straight steadiness as of a slender line of iron hidden under the lithe grace of her. She smiled more often now than of old, with the wistful wisdom of one who has tasted the salt of tears, and would drink thankfully when life, for a little day, offers a sweet draft.

Ten years had flowed by, now swiftly, now heavily, since that magical Christmas Eve when Rindge Easterson, "trailing clouds of glory from afar," had galloped into her land of heart's desire, and, leaving "one kiss within the cup," had galloped away again. No sign out of the years had ever reached her, and when, in her desolation, she gathered her courage to ask the chance sheep-herders and ranchmen about him, no one had even heard his name. A prismatic-colored bubble on the river, a shining cloud in the sky. Only the ring, fire-flashing, eternal-circled, preserved to her her dream.

Once, on a lonely wandering, she came upon an old, unmarked, long-forgotten grave, in a fold of the hills, where, perhaps, a hundred years before, some explorer who had heard the whisper, "something lost behind the mountains, go and find it," had laid down his tired body to rest until that Great Day when the crooked places shall be made straight, and the mountains shall be made low. She fancied this for herself to be Rindge's grave, fenced it apart with stones, and planted there the small, bright herbs of the mountains. Many a day she climbed up to this still place to lay on the grave a bunch of her own treasured garden flowers, musing, as she looked away

across the valleys, on the ironies and wastes of life. It did not come into her thought that to pour out thus her box of precious ointment of love was one of the wastes.

But youth cannot always grieve. The valley changed with the years, more families moved into it. The ferry cabin's wild isolation became a thing of the past. Now a woman sometimes came to spend the day with Minette, or she rode on her pony to pay a visit to some neighbor five or six miles away. The memory of Rindge was always in her heart, but hidden deep beneath newer interests, as in a landscape a ruin is slowly covered with mosses and vines.

It was with a smile for one of these preoccupations that Minette held open the door for her father and the passenger. This was a thickset, strong man, about forty years old, with a plain, mild face and kind eyes. He was not one to be noticed in a crowd, nor, if observed, to be remembered, yet children and animals came to him gladly, and his county had twice elected him sheriff. His name was Alexander MacIntyre.

His serious face mellowed with a smile as he saw the girl, a housewifely figure of welcome, in the clean, bright room, with its white-clothed table, muslin-curtained windows, and red geraniums blooming on a shelf.

"Mornin', Minette." He held her hand a moment, and the girl gave him a pretty smile as she drew it away.

"Set by," urged old Daniel. "I'm hungrier'n a b'ar, an' Mac, here, he's been ridin' trail all night."

They ate with speed, in silence, but when MacIntyre had drunk his second cup of coffee he said in his slow voice:

"You didn't ferry any one over, Minette, last night 'bout dark, when your father was down to Gressenger's?"

"Why, no," wonderingly.

"Mac's trailin' a man," her father explained. "He lost him a mile or more back, but he's got it into his head he crossed here. I tell ye he couldn't without Min or me ferried him over."

"No," ponderingly, "he couldn't

swim it this weather, stream so full o' ice."

"Couldn't swim it in summer," controverted the old man, as if the prowess of his own particular river were being called in question. "A fool or two has tried it, but they was a mighty glad to be hauled out with a rope."

"What you want him for?" The girl's face puckered anxiously.

"Murder."

"Oh," she breathed, "you deem he's right round here?"

"I don't know where he is. It's queer. He shot a man over to Keep's Bar night before last. He got away, but we struck his tracks yesterday afternoon, leadin' right here. At the Big Bowlder he headed sharp off for the Three Brothers' Ranch."

"Was he ridin'?"

"Yes, an' over to Three Brothers' his horse came in, sure enough, about an hour ahead o' us. It was sold from over there only a week ago."

"And he wasn't there?"

"Not so as we could find him," grimly.

"Cur'us he should let go o' his horse," murmured Daniel.

"Got throwed, likely. It was a shootin' row over to Keep's, an' he stopped a bullet. We trailed him by his blood a ways. My deputy's ridden on toward the Corners, but I beat back here, for I got it in my head he'd figured on makin' the mountains to hide in."

"What's his name?" Minette felt a shuddering pity for this hunted creature.

"John Hastings. He's a stranger in these parts, an' the fellow he killed, he's a poor jay. Castle's his name. Hastings' a good-lookin' chap, they say, an' young. I never see him, myself."

"He murdered a man?" shivered the girl, casting a quick glance over her shoulder, as if she heard already the howl of the pack on his bloody scent.

MacIntyre shook himself together painfully. "George!" he sighed. "I'm stiff! Thank you for a mighty nice breakfast, Minette. Got a good horse

for me, Mr. Holt? Mine's clean played out!"

"No, I ain't, Mac. Colt's lame, sorrel's as old as I be, pretty nigh, an' the girl's pony couldn't carry ye a mile. I tell ye, you get you a sleep on my bed, you're as beat out as your horse, an' I'll ride over to Gressenger an' get him to catch up one o' his young horses for you."

The weary sheriff slept without a sound for two hours. Then he pushed open the door to find Minette, her work done, patching an old coat of her father's. She welcomed him to a seat beside her with a little friendly smile, for she liked the silent, kind man, and found his frequent visits to the cabin an event to look forward to pleasantly. The man watched her fingers weave in and out nimbly. He took a fold of the garment in his hands.

"Looks real pretty an' homelike here." He nodded at her, and then at the warm room. "My cabin ain't any place you'd call home." He seemed to speak with difficulty—in jerks.

"I've felt to pity you many times—Alex." Her voice lingered on his name shyly.

"You have! That's like you. It's kind." He turned his eyes first on the floor, then out the window, never upon her.

"A man has a real forlorn time tryin' to do for himself," she told him in her sympathy.

"You could change it for me." Now his words rushed over each other. "You come keep house for me. 'Twill be another place."

Minette fixed him in honest amazement. What strange economic situation did he propose for her? At her bewilderment, his voice grew tender, his hand traveled along the coat till it touched hers.

"Did I frighten you? I've had this in my mind so long, turnin' it back an' forth, it seems's though you must have guessed it a good while ago. I think you're the best woman in the territory, an' the sweetest-faced, too, an' the one a man could love most." His own plain face worked yearningly. "I don't know

how to say it, dearie; words are kind o' small an' triflin' for the real big things in a man's life, but you can feel it there." He caught her hand and laid it for an instant against his chest, where his heart surged tumultuously. "All I got in me is yours, honey, if you'll take it."

Still Minette looked at him. Was this flushed and eager lover her good, homely Sheriff Mac, comrade of many a ride?

"Don't you say a word yet," he pleaded. "You're all taken aback. You think it over till I come next time."

At last Minette spoke, her eyes very wide and bright, her cheeks scarlet. "I never did think o' it, Alex. Folks said you never cared about any woman—that way."

He stroked her hand between both his own. "I care for one pretty little woman like the Day o' Judgment."

The girl's eyes, lambent with the light of her pure spirit, questioned his spirit in silence. "You are good, Alex." She fashioned her answer, satisfied by what she read.

The man dropped her hand to stride about the room. The homely kitchen, the sun at high noon, the man and woman in their rough workday clothes, she still holding the patched coat in her lap—it was not a scene set for romance, yet plainly in the man's face agony strove with some hidden force. He sat down again, his hands hanging clenched between his knees, his face hard set as when he hunted his man. "I wasn't going to tell you," he said huskily, "but when you ask me I can't lie to you." Yet only the candor of her eyes had questioned him. "I been married before."

A silence fell between them, the girl quiet in pity, the man staring at the floor somberly.

"She was like you, a good deal, little, an' tender, an' sweet, your ways mind me of her all the time—but—you're different, too—thank God!"

He drew the words out over lips that he constantly moistened as if each syllable hurt him. "I found her back in Missouri—it's years ago now. She was

nothing but a child, a good an' pretty one, an' I just an overgrown boy, ignorant of everythin' that a man knows. We loved each other"—his hands opened slowly and clenched again—"an' we was happy together."

"Don't tell me," the girl urged pitifully.

He shook his head, refusing any reprieve. "'Twas awful lonely for a city-raised girl 'way off on my ranch, seventy mile from anybody, an' the work was terrible heavy, too. I didn't think o' the lonesomeness nor the labor, either, for I worked like a horse, myself, an' was too tired at night to speak to folks if there'd been any."

He moved into another chair, his pain driving him like a fever. "Next year her baby came. That was a dreadful day. She wasn't ever the same afterward, an' I couldn't wonder it was so. An' pretty soon—I disremember how many months it was—the pore little baby died. I tell you I was just a boy, I couldn't feel the meanin' o' it all to her, nor how she'd grown up to be a woman in the few months." He brushed his hand slowly across his mouth.

"It's an ugly story, now. I ain't told man or woman before, it wasn't needful. There come a new foreman to my ranch, handsome as a painted picture, an' he could sing an' dance like an actor in a theater. I can call to mind some o' his songs now, for all the years that's gone. She liked him—my—my—wife did, an' I was glad she could find somethin' to cheer her up. I had to be away a good deal, an' I'd leave her to his care. I was gone a fortnight once. She'd left three days before I got back."

"Did you follow her?"

"Her letter said she hated the ranch an' was tired o' me, an' had given her heart to that man. I could a-hunted him out an' killed him, but would that a-brought her back to me?"

"Is—he livin'?"

"He died right soon, got a fall from his horse. She went off to the coast, an' long afterward she died there. She was sick a good while, I heard, an' in want."

"An' you wouldn't help her!"

"I'd have sent her money, all she needed, if I'd a-known it in time."

"You forgave her, didn't you?"

The man's hard lines softened, his face looked old, and sad, and kind. "Long ago, long ago," almost to himself.

"If she'd come home again, you'd have taken her in, wouldn't you?" with timid eagerness, in her persistence.

"No," as gently as before.

Minette went over to stand by him, laying a soft and compassionate hand upon his shoulder. "It was cruel," she murmured piteously.

He drew her hand down into his, stroking it carefully, but his eyes saw beyond her into the dead years, his caress was as unheeding as one given to a faithful dog. After a long while he spoke in his usual voice, mild and serious.

"That's all put away forever in her grave. I sold my ranch, an' come up north here hundreds o' miles from where any man'd ever heard my name. I thought the part o' me that loved a woman was dead, too, but when I met you"—now he grasped her hand with eloquent meaning—"it seems as if I could touch happiness once more like other men."

A horse neighed in the lane, the lover was the sheriff at once. "You keep a-thinkin' o' me till I come next time," he urged imploringly. "That you, Gressenger?"

Minette followed him out into the cold, her head in such a whirl that she hardly understood the message shouted from the stable door,

where Gressenger was watering his horses.

"Your father'll be over to my place till night. I'll ferry Mac across."

Left alone, she sat in a trance of bewilderment. Those strange, wonderful words to be said to her! And by Sheriff Mac! He a lover of hers! Did he care as he said? And she? Could she love him with a love that would heal his scarred heart?

She grew restless with these piercing questions, the house smothered her. She went out into the still, bright cold. Wandering about aimlessly, now loitering to muse on the strange ways of life, after her fashion of dreaming, now spurred by a sharp thought to quick steps. Presently she was by the ferry, leaning on the dock post. How little she had thought, when she had heard the sheriff wind his horn that morning, what meaning its blast held for her!

Would the sheriff catch the man he hunted? Her thoughts swung now on



"Shut the door, child; you'll have us froze," admonished her father.

that tangent. Could he have crossed the river? Alex rarely trailed on a false scent. Her glance stopped, her figure stiffened, all her wits were with her, keenly. Her hand in its mitten had stoutly grasped the post, flecked with drops of ice. These had melted in the warmth, and were running now in a thin red stream, and the wire that held the ferry rope was stained in several places with spots like rust. Minette sprang high, caught the wire above her head, and swung by her hands over the boat. She pulled herself along a foot or so, then dropped into the boat with stinging wrists. All across on the wire in the dead, cold night! But the man was a desperate fugitive, hunted for his life!

She hurried up the bank, a vague fear driving her on. The hunted man lay face down at her doorstep. Pity quelled her fear; he was helpless, dying, perhaps. She knelt at his side, turned him half over, and drew his limp arm from across his face. The face was gray and stricken with pain, the eyes closed, the long, dark lashes flat on the cheeks, yet she knew it instantly. Rindle had come back! Her heart tore once at its bonds, sickened down to nothing, then beat on its brave march. A fact so wild and astounding numbed all the small starts and tremors that wait on trivial changes. She ran into the house, brought whisky, and forced a few drops through his blue lips. He opened on her the very eyes of long ago, filmed with suffering, but dauntless still.

"Rindle," making her voice steady, "come into the house. You'll freeze."

"My name's John Hastings," in a breath of sound.

"Try, Rindle," she urged, and held the whisky to him again.

This time he gulped a mouthful. "Give me something to eat, please, and lend me a horse. I must get out o' this," he muttered.

Minette drew his arms up around her neck, locking his hands together. Her own arms she put around his body.

"Now!" she commanded, and dragged him to his feet.

It was a dreadful business. But, somehow, lurching and staggering, leaning heavily on her, he got into the cabin and on her own bed. There she warmed and fed him, and examined his hurts. Rindle watched her in silence, his eyes following her in a kind of troubled bewilderment.

"You know me?" he said, his old magic smile gleaming for an instant through his pain.

"Why, Rindle!" As if she could forget!

"People call me John Hastings," he murmured indifferently, as if it were no great matter.

"You swing over the river by the pulley wire?" She had begun to bind up his hands, grooved raw. "The sheriff was sure you came this side, somehow."

Rindle grasped her arm. "You won't give me up?" he implored desperately.

"Why, Rindle!" again, as a mother might soothe a terrified child.

At his name, bewilderment grew on his face, he frowned, and half spoke; then he shook his head weakly, and, smiling as if he were indeed her sick child, he seemed to confide himself without another doubt to her loyalty.

"Was it awful work gettin' over?"

Rindle's answer was a shudder.

"Where's your horse?"

"I hid the first night at the Arrow Circle Ranch. The owner, Sill, was a friend of mine once on the coast, and he fixed my hurt. But last night it opened up again, and bled like a stuck ox for hours, that's why I'm so weak now. A mile or so back, I hit this river, and I got off to stop the bleeding with some ice. I fainted on the bank, and Picket was gone when I came round again."

"How could you reach the ferry?"

"Walked," grimly. "Sill told me how to make it. I planned to reach the mountain and hole up at Reliance, till I could travel quick. There's a man there will stand by me, but I was played out, and had to crawl into your stable. Soon as the men were gone, I came out

for food. I trusted you'd give me some, and not round on me."

Minette listened to his voice, thrilling even in its weakness, saw his face, haggard and lined with fierce living, but sweet still to charm, and all her thoughts were swallowed up in love. She washed and bandaged the ugly hole in his arm.

"You've lost a main quantity of blood, but if you keep quiet it'll heal quick, it ain't festered. Now I'm goin' to make you some herb tea an' Injin squaw taught me for fevers."

She was gone only a moment, but when she returned the wounded man stood at the door, pale as chalk, and hanging to the doorpost.

"I must get a horse and be off," he said thickly.

Minette caught him and, in a passion of strength, lifted him back upon the bed. Her hair fell about her face in the struggle, her dress was twisted and torn open at the collar, the cord around her neck swung out, and the ring flashed upon her breast. The man stared at it strangely, in a sort of terror.

"The ring," he whispered.

"Yes, dear, the ring," still as to a sick child. "See," turning it to him, "R. E. to M. H., Rindge Easterson to Minette Holt."

"Ah!" Knowledge crept over his face in a red flood. "Christmas Day. Long ago."

Minette smiled on him in heavenly sweetness, unconscious that great tears were stealing down her cheeks for that long ago.

"I've been so many places," he murmured to himself in extenuation.

She did not understand. "Yes, dear," stroking his hair back from his forehead with a compassionate hand.

He caught the hand and kissed it. "You're the same little dearie, Minette."

"Listen! You can't sit a horse yet, you're too weak, an' I couldn't get out to the stable to care for you, if you hide there. But you're safe in my room. Father's real deaf nowadays; he won't hear you at all, an' he never in the world comes in here. When other folks are in the next room you'll have to lie

dreadful quiet." She pinned the window curtains together while she talked.

"What'll you do?"

"Oh, I never go to bed till after father nowadays, an' I'm always up first. I'll sleep right out there on the lounge, an' he'll never suspicion the least thing."

"Just as you say, you've taken charge." He smiled weakly on her.

Every hour that night, while old Daniel slept soundly, and the cold winter moon poured over the earth a liquid magic, Minette stole into her room to look at the sick man. Sometimes he was asleep; then she drew the covers more warmly around him. Sometimes he gazed up at her with dull eyes of pain; then she gave him more herb brew. She did not say a word, but her eyes told him the deep things of the heart.

The next day her father rode off downstream to help a ranchman finish a new stable. Rindge lay all day in a sort of daze, breathing quietly, not moving at all. No one came near the cabin. The second day, old Daniel being still away, Rindge was so much better that he could walk about the cabin by holding to the wall, and once, Minette on guard, had stepped to the door to draw in the tonic air. It seemed an impossible emprise to hide a man in that small cabin, yet, because of the old man's deafness and inattention to all household affairs, it was no great matter of difficulty. Rindge talked of past adventures a little, but never of the crime for which he lay in hiding, nor of the future, not even of how he could escape. Minette accepted this in a trance of unquestioning joy.

The third morning was a wonder of blue sky, white clouds, and splendid sunshine; a thin snow, fallen the day before, sparkled jewel-bright; the air was as clear as glass, and fed one like wine. A day to

Forget all fears,  
And fold away all foolish tears,  
And just be glad.

Minette decked out a little fir tree with quivering fingers, her face a-tremble with shy smiles. Old Daniel

regarded these preparations calmly. For nine years now his daughter had been marking the twenty-fifth of December thus, and though it was "a triflin' fashion o' conduct," since it gave her "consid'ble o' enjoyment," he bore his part in it with a degree of amused toleration.

"I'm obligated to ride over to the Three Brothers' Ranch 'fore we kin have our doin's," he told her after breakfast, "but it'll be so as I can be back in a couple o' hours."

His daughter nodded gayly. How beautifully that worked out her own idea! She waited, hand on the latch of her door, till her father had vanished down the lane, then she opened it, saying, with adorable shyness:

"Merry Christmas, Rindle!"

Rindle was dressed and sitting on the edge of his bed.

"It isn't Christmas Day!"

Minette laughed in the very bubble of mirth that he remembered in his boyhood: "I've always kep' it it—like you taught me, father an' me."

He reached her side waveringly, and they both sat down, their chairs opposite each other.

"You've got a tree and all!"

"Just like *our* tree," blushing a lovely rose.

The sun shot Minette's pretty, wild hair with light till it glowed a nimbus round her brow, "her eyes were deeper than the depths of waters stilled at even," her face was irradiated with joy.

"Oh, you're beautiful!" cried the man, from some boyishly glad place down in his nature, still untouched by the years. Then, in a swift change, "Why don't you ask me what I've done?"

"I know."

"They told you I killed Jo Castle?"

Minette's eyes did not waver from his. "Yes."

"He deserved to die," sternly. "He was a scoundrel, if ever one lived, though he wasn't known in his true colors. He was so smooth he kept men tricked, but I'd met him years ago, in the South, and I'd found him out good and plenty. He tried to knife me from

behind, once, and he vowed he'd get me yet, somewhere."

"An' you followed him," breathed the girl.

"I didn't kill him for that," more sternly. "He had a secret he'd got hold of, and he was just telling it to all the men in Keep's, when I happened to come in. I shut him up, then he drew his gun on me, but I got him first; his friends started in to help things along, and I left."

"Was it your secret?"

"No, a woman's. He'd held it over her head for years." He said it reluctantly. "She saw him knife me, too. She could testify for me at a trial, but I won't drag her through it, she's endured enough herself, already."

Minette's heart grew cold, like ice, and beat frozenly. "If you shot to save yourself, why must you hide like this?" she trembled out.

"Who saw me? Just his friends, he's got plenty," bitterly. "I'm a stranger from nobody knows where. No, sir," with a return of his jaunty manner, "I'm going to clear out of this by a good many miles till the thing's had time to blow over. I came here with another name—my grandfather's—John Hastings, on account of a row with a man in Arizona. I'll slip back to my own name, and I'll be all right once I'm out of this."

Rindle had told his story very quietly, without a gesture, only his bandaged hands grasped his knife, drawn out of his pocket, till the knuckles showed bare. At his words, Minette gave a little, broken cry, and hid her face in her hands. Instantly Rindle was on his knees beside her, holding her in his weak grasp.

"Little dear," he whispered. "I've been a good many kinds of a fool. I've pretty nearly ruined my chance of manhood. I've lived wild and reckless for years, but one thing's left good in me, I love you—and, by—" He broke the oath off unspoken. "I will make another try at living if you'll only help me. You will, my darling, you will?" He pressed his face up close to hers.

She bent till her soft hair rested

against his forehead. "Yes," she whispered bravely.

"Will you marry me as soon as we can plan it?"

"Yes, dear!"

"If I was only a free man, instead of having to skulk here like a coyote!" He struck his hand against the chair savagely.

The girl rubbed her hair against his cheek. "You're innocent, dear. It'll all come out right."

"But the waiting!"

"I can wait." All the courage of the years was in her patient voice.

"You've waited too long already, now; so have I." His eyes wandered to the brave little tree, making the best of Christmas. "I want to spend all my Christmas Days with you—and every day!"

The ferry horn sounded, twice.

They clung together in a kiss that was a vow, then Rindge slipped noiselessly back into his room, and Minette started for the river, trembling a little, for each person near the cabin was a menace to her secret. On the bank she stopped, surprised, for the passenger on the other side was a woman, bent wearily over her horse. A woman alone on that trail in winter was rare.

"This the trail to Reliance?" she asked, and when Minette answered her, yes, dropped off her horse, and led him aboard with the ease of old habit.

She was so hidden by a long cloak, with a hood that half covered her face, that all Minette could tell of her was that she was small, with dark, weary eyes. She shivered as she climbed the bank, and Minette thought she heard her teeth chatter.

"You stop in my cabin an' warm you," she urged kindly. "Breakfast's over, but I got some hot coffee on the back o' the stove."

"Oh, coffee!" the woman laughed, and her laugh somehow was as tired as her eyes. "Thank you, I'd like some. I've come a good way, from the Arrow Circle Ranch, toward Keep's Bar."

Minette's hand on the latch faltered. Keep's, Arrow Circle Ranch, Reliance

—the woman Rindge knew! Again her heart chilled.

The woman threw off her cloak, drinking her coffee eagerly. She was as small as Minette, and only a few years older, pretty and gay, yet with something hunted in her eyes and voice that made her prettiness pathetic, her vivacity a part bravely played.

"You don't run that ferry alone?" she asked as she set down her cup.

"Father's the ferryman."

"Where is he?" Her eyes were wandering around the cabin.

"Downstream a mile."

"Who's that tree for?"

"Just him an' me—to keep our Christmas."

"Christmas? Yes, so it is." The woman's brooding eyes met Minette's tranquil ones in a long, inscrutable glance, then drooped to the floor.

Suddenly she stood up, rigid. "Where did you get that?" She snatched something from the floor; it was a knife with a quaintly carved bone handle.

Minette shook her head mutely, in the cessation of all her ideas.

"That knife belongs to Rindge Easterson. I know, because he gave it to me." Her voice was low, but desperately clear. "How came you by it?"

Still Minette shook her head.

"Don't stand there like an image, wasting time that's more precious than gold! Where is Rindge Easterson?"

The door of Minette's room flung open. Rindge stood with them, holding out his hand, and saying thrillingly, "Nancy!" The stranger ran to him and laid both her hands in his. "Oh, my boy!" she whispered, and they stood looking intently at each other.

With the passionate speed of a dream, events hurled themselves one upon another; horses' hoofs sounded in the lane, the door opened to let in old Daniel, and, with him, the sheriff. Rindge was gone, his door shut, the strange woman had whirled her cloak around her, and taken shelter in the dark niche behind the tree.

MacIntyre spoke quietly, his eyes searching Minette's face, set with fear,



*"Minette, listen to me!" he begged, and moved one stride nearer.*

For the first time in her life, Minette knew the ugly look of suspicion.

"Who is in this cabin?"

"She," pointing to the woman. "I just ferried her over."

"I got a glimpse o' two people."

"She came alone. There's her horse." MacIntyre did not follow her gesture.

"I see her horse," quietly.

"I met Mac down the trail," old Daniel contributed, "an' turned back with him to get him some dinner."

"Some one went in that room, Minette." The sheriff was always gentle. "Who was it?"

Minette was as gentle as he. "No one, Alex; there's just her an' me in this cabin." The lie came effortlessly, but she could not bring the red to her white

cheeks, nor steady her quivering lips. The sheriff strode toward the door of the bedroom. Like a wood creature, stealthy, swift, Minette had glided ahead of him, and stood against the door, facing them all.

"You can't go into my room, Alex," she told him softly.

"Is there somethin' you're 'shamed to have seen?" He almost whispered it, and, as he spoke, he moved a step nearer.

The girl flung out a hand as if she would appeal to him, and laid it lightly against his breast.

"Go 'way, Alex, please go 'way, please go 'way!" she implored him, and now her voice was piteous.

"I'd go this instant, my little girl"—his voice shook harshly—"but I'm the

sheriff o' this county, an' I got to know first who's in there."

Like lightning, Minette had dropped her hand to his hip and snatched his pistol from its holster. She sprang back to the door and pressed the muzzle against her breast, holding it with both hands.

"Alex"—she shook all over so that the pistol jarred in her hands, but her voice was perfectly steady—"if you do not promise me on your word o' honor to go away this minute across our ferry, an' not come back for twenty-four hours, I will shoot myself."

Old Daniel, who had not understood a word of this low talk, now spoke up with amazed authority:

"Minerva Antoinette, you lay that gun right down; it's loaded, an' it might do you a mischief. You act as if you was possessed!"

"One, two," Minette began to count, slowly, evenly.

Great drops broke out on the sheriff's face. He had seen men "throw a bluff," and he had "called the bluff" successfully, and he had seen men whose most extravagant threat he knew for a dead fact; was he not sheriff of his county for that very reason? He grasped, too, with the secret instincts of his brain, that it would be just such a sober, gentle little woman as this Minette, who, at a supreme need, would fling her own life into the gap and die as recklessly as any Indian in a last charge. He hung upon his stride, confused in his decision. Reason with that white-faced, unseeing girl? Plead with her who was past hearing even his voice? Leap upon her and wrench the pistol from her hands? That was to risk death for her before even his quick strength could accomplish it.

"Minette, listen to me!" he begged, and moved one stride nearer.

"Five, six, seven," counted the girl inexorably, and the pistol clicked as she cocked it.

The bright, warm cabin was deadly still, only the cool voice, monotonous as a sleepwalker's, counting "eight, nine, ten"; the men and woman in it were like figures in a picture, caught by some

trick of the photographer in strained tragic postures, the little tree, with its candles burning cheerily down to their sockets, a grotesque mistake left from another film.

"Put up that gun, there's been enough killin' for me." The strange woman had slipped from behind the tree and stood by the door, not touching Minette, but pointing a warning hand at her. "Ridge Easterson's in there, him you call Hastings, but when you know it all, Mr. Sheriff, you won't want him."

Even while she spoke, before she had called his name, the door swung open, noiselessly, a thread at a time. Ridge, himself, thrust his arms over Minette's shoulder and closed his bandaged hands over hers and the pistol.

"Easy!" he told her, in the pleasant, careless voice of years ago, and, "Now, sheriff, I'm your man."

At the first crack of the door, MacIntyre had aimed his other pistol, and now he held both the man and woman covered.

"You hear me!" the strange woman cried out passionately, her voice strangely loud among those quiet people who had just edged such red tragedy. "I heard about the shootin' at Keep's, an' I've ridden night an' day since then to find Ridge or somebody to tell them it's all right, the world's quit of a miserable wretch." She laughed out wildly. "Put up your guns, I say; I can't talk in an arsenal."

MacIntyre holstered his pistol with a jerk, Ridge drew Minette's gently from her hand and laid it on the shelf. He still held her hand in his, leaning, as pale as she, against the door. No one spoke. Their stillness wrought upon the woman; in a quieted voice she went on, her cloak loosening from her till it fell to the floor:

"I knew Ridge, here, 'way back years ago, on the coast. I was poor, and friendless, an' dyin', an' he helped me to live, with money an' with his friendship. I was a good woman, wasn't I, Ridge, then?"

"Yes," he answered deeply, "as good as Minette there."

She thanked him with her eyes. "An' I've been good ever since, when it's meant starvation, often, an' when sinnin' was as easy—" She flung open her hand, palm out.

"But I wasn't a good woman always. I was married to the best man that ever lived, an' I loved him, too, but I was eighteen years old, an' a cheap, pretty fellow bewitched me. It's easy to bewitch eighteen." She halted a moment, as if this would be the only pity she asked for herself. "I ran away with him. He kept his hold on me just a month. I hated him by then—he was a poor creature, and tired o' me already—an' I left him. I longed to go home, but I hadn't any home any more to go to. I was 'way off on the coast, where he'd taken me, an' my home was in New Mexico. I thought maybe some time I'd find—my—husband, an' I'd try to be good for him." Her voice had grown so low that they had to bend forward to catch it.

"I told Rindge; I thought I was dyin', an' I wanted some human bein' to know what a fool I'd acted, an' how I'd eaten ashes for my sin. He found work for me when I got well, an' I tried harder than ever to earn my livin'.

"He came along then—Jo Castle, though that's not his name. He'd learned all my story—it's no matter how—an' he said he'd shout it on the housetops—if I didn't pay for quiet. I did pay—money. An' I've paid ever since, blood money, all I could make above the bread in my mouth an' the shoes on my feet." She stretched out a worn shoe and a thin hand.

"Then Rindge turned up again. He knew a story against Jo Castle that would hang him to the nearest tree if he could prove it, an' he shut Jo's mouth. One night Jo stabbed him from behind in the dark, but I found it out. I followed. I saw. I caught the knife. Your scar don't show like mine, Rindge, but it's deeper." Again she held her hand, palm out, to them, and they saw it seamed across all four fingers with a blue, livid line.

"Jo escaped. He swore to be even with me an' to kill Rindge yet. You

know how he tried at Keep's Bar. Now, Mr. Sheriff, can't you let him go?" She stopped suddenly, like one wearied of an old tale.

"Give him to me, Alex." Minette again laid her hand on the sheriff's breast. "I've known him since years ago. See, here's his ring he gave me." She pulled it out on its chain. "Give him to me for a Christmas present."

MacIntyre did not hear her, his eyes went past her to the strange woman. "You're—you're Nancy Kelvy," he said, in a strange, numb voice.

"Yes." The woman's pretty, furtive face, stained a hot scarlet from her story, turned to him recklessly. "What if I am?" Her eyes began to widen, in terror.

"Oh!" Minette flung out a hand and caught the other woman's sleeve. "Oh, can't you see it? He's told me, an' I know."

"My name is Alexander MacIntyre. I married Nancy Kelvy." He folded his arms as if it were a bald fact not concerning him much. Then, suddenly, the iron of his control broke; he sank into a chair by the table, and buried his face in his arms.

"Alex, forgive her." Minette was on her knees beside him in her stress. "She's your wife just as much as she ever was. She's repented. She's suffered. She is good. Think how good to ride days to save Rindge, an' to tell us all her secret for his sake! Speak to him, Rindge, Nancy!" Tears ran down her face, she shook his arm with both hands.

Nancy drew nearer, whispering like a timid child: "I don't ask to be forgiven, Sandy"—at the name MacIntyre started through all his thick body—"but I've always loved you."

"Forgive her," Minette's voice pleaded on. "It's Christmas Day; think o' that, you can't be hard to-day, Alex. Peace on earth, good will to men.' It's the day when Christ was born, Who forgives your sins and mine, an' the sins o' the whole world. You know you've always loved her, always; it was because I minded you of her you thought you prized me. Take her, a Christmas gift

from me." Minette sprang up, drew the woman toward the man, and, opening his closed fist, laid her hand in his.

"Take me home, Sandy," Nancy's voice thrilled suddenly in a pitiful cry.

The man stood up and opened his arms, and the woman threw herself into them speechlessly.

Minette ran to Rindle and hid her eyes against his breast; he bent his head to kiss her soft hair. Even old Daniel went to stare out of the window.

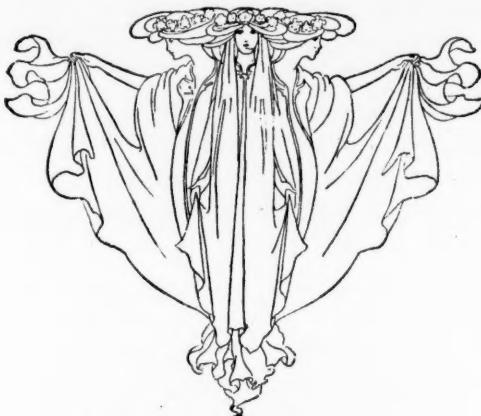
At last MacIntyre raised his face, all blurred with tears.

"I take her as your Christmas present, Rindle," he said, his voice not steady on the words, "an' here I give

you yours." He laid his hand on Minette's hair. "Have your freedom, an' your little sweetheart, too."

Minette caught a hand of each of the two men in one of hers. "Father, come," she called. "There!"

The old man took Nancy's hand and Rindle's, as she pointed to him, and so they stood for a moment around the little, brave tree—symbol of all gifts rich and sumptuous, no matter what their outer value, if the givers' hearts be in them—not quite smiling yet, not merry, but each one drinking into lonely or tired spirit the message of Christmas Day, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy."



### Sonnet for Christmas

SO often have I watched Thy changeless stars  
In still, majestic pomp, roll through the night;  
So oft beheld Thy wondrous dawn renew  
Its splendor in the East; while blood-red Mars  
Burned like a torch, and brighter and more bright  
The seething, rosy tide of Day swept through,  
Wave after wave, the Morning's golden bars,  
Till all the dewy air was filled with light;

And thought: "How long until He come again,  
Thy Perfect One?" When lo, the answer given:  
"As to the darkened world returns the Dawn,  
So Christ returneth in the hearts of men.  
The Morning Star shines lonely in my Heaven,  
But Day appeareth when the Night is gone."

VICTOR STARBUCK.

## THE VALIANT

BY JAMES HAY, JR.

WOMAN!

To clothe her with cheap baubles of adornment, strong men drop down into deep seas and fight with Death for pearls; or live shuddering lives in the teeth of frozen winds for furs; or die in the poison of fetid swamps pursuing the glint of birds' plumage; or tear out the foundations of the earth for jewels; or become learned in the lore of barter trafficking for soft silks.

To pay the debt, she must be a master builder, constructing her own world from the frail timbers of little drudgeries in the solitude of the day.

And in the evening, fulfilling her dramatic destiny, reconquer always the sons of men.

And, schooled by them to vanity, never stoop to smallness.

And, reared behind the ramparts of luxury, stand fearless in the midst of pestilence, and famine, and woe.

She is at once the plaything and the princess, the victim and the inspiration, of her little children, men.

There is for her ever the long and burdened fight, never the short, sharp battle.

Protected and pursued, exalted and put down, she stands guard over the centuries, and rises, a colossus for good, overcoming the million menaces of her incredible fate.

She is creation's valiant soul—the one bell-like note that rings true throughout all history.



# THE SPIRIT OF THE DAY

BY  
GRACE TORREY

ILLUSTRATED BY SIGURD SCHOU

## PERSONS IN THE PLAY:

PLUM PUDDING  
INDIGESTION  
A FRENCH DOLL  
A BUSTER BROWN DOLL  
THE PRESENT THAT NOBODY EVER WANTED  
A CHILD  
A TIRED WOMAN

*SCENE: A shadowy room, littered with tissue paper, ribbons, packages, et cetera; in the lamplight a woman sews frantically, putting the last stitches into the costume of a French doll. As the clock strikes twelve, she puts the doll down, with a long, weary yawn.*

THE WOMAN: That's done at last! (*She gets up, stretching.*) Oh! Oh! Oh! How tired I am! Eighty-one presents! It's enough to kill me. I believe next Christmas I'll go away. (*She moves about wearily, as if looking for something.*) Where in the world did I put that list? It would be too awful to have left out some one. (*She shuffles about the heaped-up articles on the table—tissue paper, thread, scraps of cloth, et cetera.*) It isn't as if anybody wanted a present. But it's the spirit— Oh, here it is. (*Reads from the list, making occasional comments.*) Tom—two dollars and fifty cents; that's really too little to spend on Tom. Grace Breckinridge, slippers. I had the yarn. Amy, ninety-eight cents; Bess, handkerchief; Roger, tie, one dollar and twenty-five cents; Maud—she always gives me something nice, so I simply had to come to the scratch this year. The Briggs children. Wretched little monsters! They have so much now, they don't know which way to turn. They'll never look at the things I'm sending. But I simply had to. The Briggs always remember Baby. I wonder if Baby really

doesn't know I have that Buster Brown doll for her. Children are so sophisticated, nowadays. You can hardly surprise them any more. I doubt if Baby really believes in Santa Claus, any more than I do. But we have to keep it up, just to counteract the dreadful materialism of this age. After all, the spirit is the important— (*Goes on checking off. Stares suddenly, aghast, and holds her pencil poised.*) Aunt Lizzie! Aunt Lizzie! Of all people! I—have—no, I can't have—yes, I have! (*Puts both hands to her head, and says, half crying*) : Oh, I am so tired! Why must I always think of everything and everybody? No one else in this house will remember her; but if I don't, the family will never forgive it. Oh, dear! It's so late, now. I can't make anything. I've got to give her something in the house. And she knows everything I have. Oh, dear! (*Stands working her hands, and looking pitifully around, as if to find a Christmas present materializing in the air.*) I might — Oh! I know the very thing. That bag that Esther sent me last year. She never sees Aunt Lizzie. And I've never

shown it to a soul.  
(Goes to a heaped-up basket in the corner.)

It's very ugly: a bright red, green, and yellow chintz, with wide yellow ties.  
(Draws out bag and looks at it. Shakes her head.) I had forgotten it was so dreadful! Well—

(Begins to roll it up in tissue paper. Ties careful bow, and writes card, reading as she writes.) "To dearest Aunt Lizzie. With oceans of love, and warmest Christmas Greetings from her devoted niece,

Carrie." There! That ought to make anything welcome. And really, it isn't the gift that counts. It's the spirit.  
(Puts the card under the ribbon and takes the package and the doll over to the back of the stage. Gathers up the mess on her table. Pushes the table back to the wall. Looks around, yawning and moaning.) Well, I must go and get a little sleep. I can make things look better in the morning. Later in the morning, I mean. (Very dolefully.) It's Merry Christmas already—and Baby will be up at six, getting excited, and catching cold. And eating too much! I wish the plum pudding didn't always give her such dreadful indigestion. But it always has, and I suppose it will always have to. I wouldn't think of having it, if it weren't for the spirit. (Yawns.) Oh, I am—so—tired!  
(Goes out yawning, and finishing diminuendo.) The spirit—of—the—day—ha—hum!

(As she disappears, enter, ponderously, from the side, Plum Pudding. He is round, pigeon-toed, pompous, with a fat voice. He stands facing the audience, but looking apprehensively out of the corners of his eyes toward the entrance by which he has come on. There rewards his gaze the thin, bent form of Indigestion in stringy clothes, her head



"Oh! How tired I am! Eighty-one presents!  
It's enough to kill me."

tied up in a large cloth, her hands clasped over her stomach. She is pale and wears a woebegone expression. She, too, stands facing the audience with a sidelong eye for Plum Pudding, who speaks.)

P. P.: So there yer comes hagain!

INDIGESTION (afraid, yet acid): Well, you heard what she said. I always have come after you. I suppose I'll always have to.

P. P. (with slow backward gesture of the head toward woman's exit): 'Oo said? 'Er? (With meaning eye for Indigestion.) Womanfolk is all fools.

INDIGATION (infinitely satiric): I may look like a fool. But do you flatter yourself that I follow you around because I want to?

P. P. (fatty violent): W'at do Hi care w'y yer follers me haround? Yer follers me, doesn't yer? 'Oo cares w'ether yer wants ter, or doesn't want ter, his honly yer goes hon follerin'? (Mimicking Indigestion, but not being able, for physical reasons, to bend over.) Do Hi flatter myself that she wants ter foller haround hafter me? No, hand don't flatter yerself has Hi wants yer, neither. Me, a respectable British gent, halways hand forever 'ounded by a female of no charm, no appearance. W'er ever Hi ham, hit's halways the sime. Christmas day, heverybody smilin' hand pleasant. Hi comes hin hall decryted with 'olly, hand burnin' bloo blazes. Heverybody claps 'is 'ands hand sez: "'Urray for the plum puddin'!" Hi halways makes han hagreable first himpression. Then wot 'appens? Within a hour, before folks 'as time ter go 'ome hand 'ave their troubles comfortable like, 'ere you comes hin, hand the sime hold song begins. Them as 'ave het the most

hopens hup reg'lar: "That miserable plum puddin' his givin' me the hindigession hagain. Hi houghtn't never ter 'ave nothink ter do with 'im. Hi never would, neither, honly ter be hin the Christmas spirit." Does hanybody think Hi likes hit—halways givin' my friends the stummick hache?

P. P. (*much affected, would wipe his eyes, were he not so fat.*)

INDIGESTION (*weeping*): Oh, I wish you wouldn't be so hard on me! I never wanted you to give me to anybody.

(*Voice from behind makes them both start and turn, to see a long figure, in rustling white, a red ribbon about his waist, a placard sticking cornerwise through the ribbon, on which it is possible to read the words of the Woman's message to Aunt Lizzic. The figure rustles up, saying:*)

UNKNOWN: Hold on there, hold on there! I must be in this!

P. P. (*heavily*): Hand 'oo, may Hi hask, hare yer?

UNKNOWN: Who am I? Who are you, you middle-class British institution? Who are you, to ask who I am? (*With scorn to Indigestion.*) Cry baby! What have you to wail about? (*Walks nervously around, ejaculating.*)

UNKNOWN: Idiots! Nuisances! With warmest love! Stuff! With warmest maledictions! (*Turns upon Indigestion.*) You've nothing to cry about, I say. Nothing. I'm not even sorry for you. You come in the natural order of things. Plum Pudding—Indigestion—it's a cosmic process. It's cause and effect. You are, because you are predetermined to be. You must be. But I! I never even needed to exist! Once, oh, happy, happy once, I was not! (*He lifts his face, to address the heavens.*) Once there was no unhappy I. Once I was not. And now I have to be *am*. And unthinking conventions—pure, mechanical, instinctive, unreasoning habits—like you (*Stares at P. P., who is much outraged*) are forever asking, 'Oo am I!'

(*A giggle is heard from the corner, and a voice, saying:*) Silly, disagreeable old thing! Who do you suppose he is?

ANOTHER VOICE: I don't care. Kiss me again!

(*There is a loud sound of smacking, causing the group to turn, discovering the newly finished doll in the embrace of a Buster Brown. They have entered, on tiptoe, hand in hand, at back of stage, during Unknown's last speech.*)

P. P. (*darkly*): Hit's that misbehavin' French Doll hand that himmature piece of dry goods she's soft hon. For that matter, hall the girls hare fond of me—hat first.

INDIGESTION (*sourly*): Sickening little sentimentalists!



"So there yer comes hagain!"

UNKNOWN: How can you kiss each other that way? Don't you know how dangerous it is to kiss? How germicidal? How medieval? How commonplace? Don't you know that everybody kisses—the sick, the fat, the homely, the thin, the—

(*The Dolls do not look at him, but rapturously at each other.*)

B. DOLL: But this is an especial kiss.

FRENCH DOLL: Yes. It expresses the spirit of the day!

(*P. P. groans. Indigestion moans. The Unknown strides toward them.*)

**UNKNOWN:** The spirit of the day, indeed! I'll spirit you! Come here. (*They come, terrified, to the front of the stage.*) Listen! You dare to love each other?

**THE DOLLS** (*trembling, but brave*): We do!

**UNKNOWN:** Fools!

**P. P.:** Come, come! Hit's appropriate to their youth hand propinquity. The young halways loves somebody. They loves me—hat first. (*Looks savagely at Indigestion.*)

**INDIGESTION** (*pettishly*): I wish he wouldn't make these vulgar allusions to me.

**UNKNOWN:** Propinquity? Youth? Doll's face! (*To the Buster Brown Doll.*) You think she's pretty, do you?

**B. B. Doll:** I know it, sir.

**UNKNOWN** (*to French Doll*): You love him, do you?

**FRENCH DOLL** (*nodding*): Oh, yes, dreadfully!

**UNKNOWN** (*tossing his head*): Well, here's what your spirit of the time does for you. You (*looking at B. B.*) are to stay here. You (*looking at French Doll*) are to be given to the youngest and meanest Briggs.

(*Dolls shriek and fall into each other's arms.*)

**P. P.:** Well, my raisins! Hit hain't right. Poor young loyvers!

**INDIGESTION** (*sniffing*): Oh, well, they'd probably quarrel in no time.

**P. P. (furiously)**: Hi tells yer, they wouldn't probably. Halways cuttin' hin with yer would probablys! (*To Unknown*): And you, wild, rampagin' humpstart individual, 'oo hare yer, ter know so much, hanyways?

**BOTH DOLLS:** Yes, yes, you cruel man, who are you?

**UNKNOWN** (*desperately*): Come here! (*All crowd about.*) I'll tell you who I am. I am the Present Nobody Ever Wanted!

**P. P. (glaring at Indigestion):** My word for hit, young feller, yer not the fust.

**INDIGESTION** (*clasping her stomach*): Oh, how I ache for you!

**B. B. DOLL** (*embracing French Doll*): Brute! It serves him right.

**FRENCH DOLL** (*wiping her eyes, and shaking her head*): I don't believe him. Nobody ever didn't want a present.

**UNKNOWN:** Little ninny! Listen! Sixteen years ago this night—at this very hour—I was finished by Aunt Lizzie, sitting over there in that very chair.

**FRENCH DOLL:** What! Not that chair! Why, that's the chair I was finished in, too! (*To Buster Brown Doll.*) You see, dear, I've had the best of advantages. I was finished in one of the oldest and most established finishing places!

**UNKNOWN** (*glaring*): If you will kindly let me finish! As I was saying, she didn't want to make me, but she had to do something for Cousin Jane. When I was finished, she said, "Thank Heaven!" and sent me off. I went, ignorant creature that I was, happy in the thought that I would be loved. But was I? I tell you, no! Cousin Jane put me away in a drawer for two years. She wrote Aunt Lizzie that I was lovely. She told me I was a perfect fright. At the end of two years she sent me to Cousin Sarah Alice, in Canada, because she was too far away for Aunt Lizzie to find out. Cousin Sarah Alice said, My word, I would stop a clock! and put me away for four



"Once there was no unhappy I. I never even needed to exist!"

years, when she sent me to Cousin Esther, in Iowa. Cousin Esther looked at me once, and said: H'm! The relations thought they could send her anything, just because she lived in Ioway. Then I was laid away again, this time for nine years.

FRENCH DOLL: Nine years! My! Isn't he old?

B. B. DOLL: Yes. Be patient with him, dearest. Only think, the poor creature is in his nonage. We must be very respectful and kind to him. The sight of youth, and life, and loveliness in such as you and I is among the very few pleasures left to the old and unlovely, such as he.

FRENCH DOLL: Stupid of him to be shut up for nine whole years. If any one treated me that way, I should put an end to it in three minutes!

UNKNOWN (*desperately*): End to it! End to it! Oh, you poor little inexperienced new-born thing! Did I not long to end it? Did I not pray for the end? But I was so horrible that the moths would not eat me. Then, last Christmas, Cousin Esther took me out of moth balls, aired me, and sent me here—to get even, she said. And now, I am done up to go back to Aunt Lizzie. There's your spirit of the time. I tell you— (*He tears off his wrappings, and comes out a very homely, limp bag, scarlet and green, with large yellow flowers.*) I tell you, I revolt! I will not be given away! I will not even lend myself to the machinations of the spirit of the time any longer. Nobody wants to give me nor get me. And I won't be given, nor gotten, any more. I hereby revolt!

(*Sensation in the group.*)

INDIGESTION (*hysterically*): I won't neither, oh, I won't neither, I won't neither! I revolt!

P. P. (*savagely to Indigestion*): Be quiet. 'Oo hare yer, any'ow? Yer honly

a consequence of me. Nothink but han heffect. Hand hif Hi decides ter be the cause, yer can't 'elp yerself.

INDIGESTION (*to P. P., on her knees*): Oh, please don't go on caus-ing me. I don't want to be given to anybody. (*Clasping her stomach.*) It hurts so to be forever unwelcome. Please join me and this revolting gentleman.

B. B. DOLL: Come on, mister. I'm in for it, too. You see, the young-est Briggs has a horrible reputation for mutilat-ing. It fairly makes one's sawdust burn to think of it. And—and I do love her. (*Embraces French Doll. Very manly, but on the edge of tears.*)

FRENCH DOLL: Oh, Plum Pudding, dear, good Plum Pudding! Please join the revolution. I'm so young; so beau-tiful; so eager for life and love; so formed for a kindlier fate!

P. P. (*sentimentally*): I knows 'ow yer feels. Hi'm a kindly creeter, myself, naterally. (*Looks malevolently at Indigestion on her knees.*) Get up, there. Did Hi say for yer ter kneel down?

(*Dolls help Indigestion up. All form a supplicating group about P. P.*)

ALL: Oh, join with us, join with us!

P. P.: Hit goes 'ard. Hi've kind of got the 'ang of comin' hin hon a platter, blazin' bloo hand bright. Hand hit's hagreeable ter 'ear them say has 'ow my blazin' represents the spirit of the time. Hand hall the laughin'— (*Shakes his head.*)

UNKNOWN: Think how they turn on you later.

P. P.: Ho, yes! Hi feels hit. His they didn't hall turn hon me, later! My 'olly! Hit's a shime to turn on a kindly creeter, like me! Blime, Hi'll join yer. 'Ere's my 'and hon hit!

(*While he has been talking, the child has put her head in at the curtain at*



"I don't care. Kiss me again!"

*the rear of the stage, and looks on, smiling. When P. P. extends his hand, child speaks.)*

CHILD: What an interesting dream I am having!

(Unknown takes P. P.'s hand, crying): Yours for the revolution! Down with the spirit of the time!

THE DOLLS (*embracing and dancing round and round*): Yes, yes! Yours for the revolution!

INDIGESTION: Down with everybody's spirits! Down with all kinds of spirits!

CHILD (*coming in a little way, timid, but smiling*): Merry Christmas, everybody!

(*Grand consternation. Unknown gets into the back of the group. The dolls stiffen. Indigestion slinks to the side of P. P., who alone remains bland.*)

P. P.: Merry Christmas yerself, Child, hif hi may mike so free.

CHILD (*advancing*): Are you Plum Pudding? (*Looking up at him and smiling*.) Mm! But you look good! I love you. (P. P. *ecstatic*. Child sees Indigestion.) Oh! I know you! (*Mimics her characteristic posture*.) You're what he (*points to P. P.*) gives me every year. But I don't mind. Lots of things give one Indigestion, all the time, that aren't half so jolly as Plum Pudding. Besides, I'd rather have Indigestion any day, than castor oil.

INDIGESTION (*quite beside herself with mingled indignation and pleasure*): Castor oil! I should hope so. Slimy reptile! I can't bear to be mentioned in the same day with him. But you're a dear child! It has been so long since any one appreciated my peculiar nature. Just for that, I promise not to hurt next time, not one bit!

FRENCH DOLL: She does look like a dear child. I'm sure she

would be kind to me. Please, Child, can't I be given to you, this Christmas? I want so much to stay with him!

CHILD (*calmly*): Do your clothes button and unbutton?

FRENCH DOLL: Yes. And only see my eyelashes!

CHILD (*suspiciously*): You're not just a new head on an old doll I had last year?

B. B. DOLL (*indignantly*): Indeed, she is not! She came out of the very next box to mine. She's not been in this house two weeks.

CHILD: Oh! Two weeks? Mother has been shutting herself off upstairs for about two weeks, where I couldn't come in, nor talk through the door, nor anything. The last time I knocked, she said if I didn't go away and stay away, she'd tell Santa Claus not to bring me a thing. Oh! Let me tell you something. Come here! I'll tell you a secret. (*All crowd about but Unknown, who glowers apart.*)

CHILD (*mysteriouslly*): Father and mother are Santa Claus. They don't know that I know. And you mustn't ever tell. It would spoil their Christmas. Promise you won't tell!

(*All but Unknown take the Child's hands.*) We promise!

P. P.: 'Ere's ter the spirit of the day!

UNKNOWN (*advancing with fury*): Tr-r-aitors! Not two seconds ago you had all given your word to me, your pr-r-omise. Now, what are you doing? What do you mean?

CHILD (*gazing in delight at Unknown*): Why! If there isn't my beautiful present that I've alw ays wanted! (*Goes up to him, and touches the yellow flowers.*) Aren't they sweet? I've seen you lots of times in mother's drawer upstairs. I've always wanted you.



"Sixteen years ago this night—at this very hour—I was finished by Aunt Lizzie, sitting over there in that very chair."

(All show astonishment.)

UNKNOWN (aghast): Who? Me? Me beautiful? You—you don't mean you'd really like to have me? Why! What could any one—what could you do with me?

CHILD: Oh, lots of nice things. You would do beautifully to keep mice in. Or I could cut you all up and plant you for a garden outside my playhouse.

UNKNOWN: A garden! Me a garden! Oh! (Embracing Child.) You darling! (Holding her and addressing the others.) If they'll let me be a garden, I hereby unrevolt!

FRENCH DOLL: Oh, me, too! Me, too! If I can be with him!

B. B. DOLL: Me, too, if I can be with her!

P. P.: Hm! W-e-l-l—Hi believe Hi'm with yer. Hi never went hin strong for no revolootions. Hi thought them a trifle hexreme.

INDIGESTION: I won't hurt you much, really. And if you don't mind his giving me you, I unrevolt, too.

CHILD (bewildered): Unrevolt? Why, what had you all revolted about?

ALL: Against the spirit of the time.

CHILD (shocked): Not—not against Christmas?

B. B. DOLL: You bet.

FRENCH DOLL: Yes, indeedy.

P. P. (uncertainly): W-e-l-l, miss, Hi fancy we might call hit that.

INDIGESTION: But it didn't mean anything. Just a passing disagreement.

CHILD: My! What a strange dream I'm having! You really mean no presents; no stomach ache; no secrets; nobody shut upstairs, getting tired?

UNKNOWN: We—we did mean just that, my dear!

P. P.: And nobody 'aving ter give thinkin' e didn't want ter give ter nobody 'e didn't want ter give it ter.

FRENCH DOLL: And no one making



"What an interesting dream I am having!"

persons go where they perfectly hated to go.

UNKNOWN (shrieking and throwing himself down at the Child's feet): Oh! Oh! And no poor, ugly creature, that didn't want to be made, getting made, and sent where he wasn't wanted. Oh! Oh! Oh! (Sobs.)

CHILD (puzzled, almost crying): Why! Don't people give Christmas presents because they want to? Oh, dear! Didn't mother—I mean Santa Claus—want to give me my white Teddy Bear last Christmas? And my

doll that hasn't any head, that I sleep with at night—do you suppose maybe she didn't want to be given to me? (Looks appealingly at the French Doll, who is unhappy, but expects some one to help her out.)

P. P.: Well, my little lydy, of course hit's 'ard hon yer, but think of hours—hand heverybody's self-respects. 'Oo wants ter be givin' hand takin' thinks e don't want from folks has don't want ter give hand take them? We got, has hit were, ter mullin' hit hall hover, hand decided, has hit were, ter quit this 'ere Christmas business.

CHILD: Oh, dear, what shall I do? (Looks sorrowfully from one to another anxious, helpless face. A sound is heard outside.)

CHILD: Oh! It's mother coming! You mustn't, mustn't do it! I tell you, it would never do! I know father and mother wouldn't like it. Oh, dear! She's coming! Please stand still, and shell think she's having a dream. Please stand still, till I can get her away!

(Enter the Woman. She looks past the Child, smiling tearfully at her, and sees all the figures standing against the wall. The Child's arms are spread out, as if to screen the figures.)



"Oh, mother! mother! Look at me!"

CHILD: Oh, mother! mother! Look at me! Don't look anywhere but just at me. I'm having such an interesting dream.

WOMAN: Dream? I had a dream, too. It must have been a dream. I thought—I dreamed—that all the presents had revolted. I thought—I dreamed—that they had all agreed to quit the Christmas business. (Sees the child.) Why! There's Baby! She'll get her feet cold. Oh! (Looks around at the rigid figures.) Oh! She'll see them, and find out that they've revolted. Oh! That will never do. I mustn't let her find out.

(Moves over to child, and puts her arms about her. Speaks tenderly.)

WOMAN: Merry Christmas, you naughty little prowler! Come back to bed and warm your feet, or Santa Claus won't give you anything.

CHILD (looking up at her): Oh, mother, tell me!

WOMAN (drawing her gently toward the door, looking around to see that the child's eyes are shielded from the figures): Tell you what, darling?

CHILD: Tell me, mother, what is Merry Christmas?

WOMAN: Merry Christmas? What a

funny question? Why, it's giving things, and getting them, and being happy.

CHILD (mournfully): Giving things, and getting them, and being happy? But suppose you aren't happy. Suppose folks don't want to give what they give, nor get what they get; who's going to be happy, mother?

WOMAN (stammering): Oh, but honey, not want to! How foolish! Everybody wants to give presents and get them.

CHILD (fearfully looking over her shoulder at the figures): But, mother, suppose there weren't any presents, what would we do?

WOMAN (looking fearfully around): No presents? Why—why—then we'd have to get along, and love each other, and be happy anyway.

CHILD: But can't we be happy both ways, mother?

WOMAN (doubtfully): Why, dear—aren't you happy?

CHILD: Not if you're tired, and not if you didn't want to give me my white Teddy Bear that Santa Claus brought last year. And not if everybody hates everything, and wishes he wasn't given to people, or giving to people.

(Great commotion and nodding among figures. Warning gestures from Child and from Woman.)

WOMAN (drawing Child gently toward exit): Oh, but if we're tired, we love to be tired, and if we give things we don't—just exactly want to, it's because we do want to more than we don't want to. And nobody hates anybody.

CHILD: Really, mother?

WOMAN: Really, dear.

P. P. (advancing, in spite of warning from Child): Hi 'ates 'er. (Points at Indigestion.)

INDIGESTION: Oh, I hate him!

(Woman gestures frantically.)

FRENCH DOLL AND B. B. DOLL: We hate the Briggses.

UNKNOWN (throwing up his arm): Everybody hates me!

(Woman and Child cling to each other in terror, looking around at last.)

CHILD: You didn't hear anything, did you, mother?

WOMAN: I—why—did you, dear?

CHILD: I—I'm afraid I did.

WOMAN: Wh-what was it like?

CHILD: It was like a whole world full of tired mothers and greedy children and miserable Christmases.

WOMAN (*beginning to cry*): Oh, yes! That's just it. I am so tired. And I only wanted to make people happy.

CHILD (*beginning to cry*): But I don't want you to be tired making me happy. I don't want you to shut yourself up upstairs, and not let me come in. I don't want anything but you, and—and one other something that I can't have.

WOMAN (*on her knees*): Oh, dearest! You always have me. Always! Always! And there's nothing you can't have.

CHILD (*cheering up*): Not even the beautiful red bag, with yellow poppies on it, that nobody likes but me?

(Unknown steps forward in great excitement. Child holds up warning finger.)

WOMAN: What? That awful—that—why, deary! Of course, if you truly want it. But don't you want anything else? Not any dolls, dear? Not even a Buster Brown boy doll?

(Dolls tiptoe forward, arm in arm. Child puts her finger on her lip, and shakes her head.)

CHILD: Oh, I've so many dolls. I think I don't need any more just now. I'd like to give all the dolls to some nice child who doesn't have any.

WOMAN (*reflectively*): Why! I believe I know the very one! But, deary, think! Don't you want any plum pudding? Not even a little mouthful?

CHILD: Oh—let's give all the plum pudding to the Briggses.

(P. P. and Indigestion eye each other, with dawning favor.)

WOMAN (*laughing*): What a quantity of indigestion we'd be presenting them with!

P. P.: Well, my leaves hand 'olly! Hi'd fair hinjoy givin' them Briggs children Hindigestion.

WOMAN (*warningly*): We can

do it, dearest, if you really want to. But remember! If we do, there won't be any Merry Christmas at our house!

(Gets up, begining to draw child out between the figures standing on either side.)

CHILD: Oh, but yes, there will! You see, the really Christmas part will all be left. I'll have you—and you'll have me. And we'll both have father. And we can all go to see Aunt Lizzie, and take her some of my radishes that I grew in my garden!

BOTH TOGETHER (*laughing, and taking hands, and dancing out*): Oh, won't that be a Merry Christmas!

(They go out, seeing each other, and not any of the figures who stand looking after them.)

UNKNOWN (*recovering himself, goes about room, from figure to figure, swaggering a trifle, perhaps, and feeling himself*): What do you think? I'll do beautifully to keep mice in! (Inspects his poppies with incredulous delight.) Or I could be cut up and planted in a garden! (Approaches the door. With sudden burst of enthusiasm.) She really wants



"Oh—let's give all the plum pudding to the Briggses!"

me. I can do something. Hooray! It's Merry Christmas! (*Goes out, leaping and shouting.*)

**THE DOLLS** (*falling into each other's arms*): Oh, we can stay together always. Down with the revolution! It's Merry Christmas! (*Dance out, in each other's arms. The stage is left to P. P. and Indigestion, who stand as at entering, facing the audience, eying each other.*)

P. P. (*piously*): Hi suppose hit's hin-  
evitable that a poor female creeter like  
yer should foller haround arter a male  
man. Hit's a lor of nater. So 'oo' ham  
Hi ter blime yer?

**INDIGESTION** (*incredulous*): Do you

mean you don't mind my coming with  
you to the Briggses?

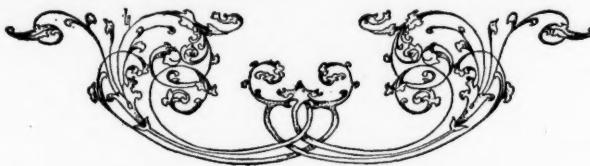
P. P. (*quite melting*): Mind? My  
dear, Hi may say Hi'm free ter hadmit  
that the day with the Briggses wouldn't  
reely be hendoorable without you.

**INDIGESTION** (*straightening up, and holding up her hands*): Oh, my! Oh,  
my! I've got to follow him around—  
and he doesn't mind it! (*Throws herself wildly upon P. P., and, as far as possible, embraces him.*)

**INDIGESTION**: Oh, it's surely Merry  
Christmas.

P. P. (*fatly*): 'Ere's ter the spirit of  
the day!

CURTAIN.



### Too Many Photographs

THE national capital is one place where women, however vain they may be, have their photographs taken so often that it bores them to the point of extinction.

Madame Bryn, the wife of the Norwegian minister to this country, entertained some of her friends not long ago by telling them of her experience with enterprising Washington photographers when she first arrived in that city.

"These photographers," she laughed, "have a reputation with the diplomatic corps which would surprise them. When I arrived in Washington, I went for a few days to the Normandie Hotel. While waiting to be assigned to my suite, I stepped into the parlor, and there, to my horror, was a photographer in one corner, another in another corner, and two or three in front of me—all with their cameras set up and ready for business. I tried to back out, but was met at the door by still another fiend."

"Hold still, Madame Bryn!" they cried, in chorus. "This is absolutely necessary. Everybody is waiting for your picture. All new diplomats and their wives have to do this."

"I do not speak English very well, and, being absolutely bewildered by the onslaught, I submitted, particularly as I thought they might have a permit from the government. After they had taken my pictures in street clothes, they sent me upstairs to change to evening clothes. Now they have me copyrighted so that I cannot even give one of my pictures to a friend."

"And," continued Madame Bryn, "they treated Madame Paul Ritter, the wife of the Swiss minister, much as they did me. She was literally kidnaped by photographers. Soon after she arrived here a leading photographer called with a big automobile, hustled her into it, and started her downtown. She asked if her husband knew about it. The reply was that he did. The first thing she knew, she was in the photographer's studio and was being photographed in a dozen different attitudes."



## Snaring the Bluebird

By Elizabeth Newport Hepburn

Author of "The Medieval Mate," "Poor Peggy," etc

**T**HREE is a pessimistic theory that seems to possess most of us early in life—the theory that there are so many more ways of being wretched than of being happy. Possibly, this is because wretchedness is ordinarily an acutely conscious state of mind, whereas happiness is oftentimes unconscious, or subconscious, although with fleeting moments of the most complete self-consciousness that exists in this world.

Quite apropos of this is the fact that the old theologians, and reformers, and religious artists painted, in their parables and pictures, many roads to hell—and only one to heaven!

The roads to hell were wide and easy, a comfortable down grade, exquisitely appealing to the slothful, the ease loving, the temperamental opportunist. On the other hand, the road to heaven was a narrow, precipitous, rocky path, presumably wide enough for but one at a time! You went to hell in a rush, accompanied by the weak, the wicked, the predestined-to-damnation brand of sinner; you went to heaven slowly, with a sense of loneliness and hardship, and you must keep close to that one path. Any divergence meant ruin; presumably a bypath, any bypath, led eventually to the downward highway.

To reach heaven, you had to stick to that little, straight, rocky, lonesome road—and, as you walked, you wondered how the saints, and the martyrs, and all the splendid army of the virtuous ever could have passed over that discouragingly narrow path, fringed about with every known type of thornbush, with a precipice on the right hand and a precipitous wall on the left.

It was all rather melancholy, this

"stepping heavenward" of the old theologies. If, as a pious child, you were cursed with imagination, you thought frequently of the damned, treading so casually that downward road, splendidly ignorant or oblivious of their destiny, which, of course, led ultimately to the "lake of fire and brimstone."

You pitied them the painful outcome—but you likewise envied them a little! After all, they seemed so light-hearted, so unconscious of danger, and of their own shocking sinfulness; whereas you were eternally obsessed by thoughts of your own peril. For you might stumble and fall any moment; the precipice yawned for you, thorns tore at your hands, and pierced your garments. Above all, you were so lonesome! Why, you wondered, couldn't the path to heaven be at least as broad as the road to hell? And why couldn't you feel that sense of companionship which evildoers enjoyed?

Now and then you did feel it—possibly at church—standing up between father and mother, and singing your favorite hymn at the top of your lungs. But, usually, at prayer time, you did not feel at one with the preacher or with your family; somehow it was a foregone conclusion that when you felt like praying, it wasn't prayer time, and when the hour for prayer arrived, you preferred some other form of entertainment.

But time alters creeds as well as customs, and nowadays even churchly, Bible-reading people talk less about the broad road which leadeth to destruction, and more about social betterment, the upward trend of progress and evolution.

In other words, more roads to heaven have opened up, and the road to hell is even boarded across now and then, and plainly labeled: "No Thoroughfare."

Once upon a time, when a well-brought-up child saw a drunken man, he was conscious of the powers of darkness in visible form. The Demon Rum was no mere figure of speech; he had horns and hoofs as any well-conducted devil should have. But nowadays even very young children of all classes reflect the developing public opinion that the drunkard is out of mind, ill, the victim of a habit that many physicians consider as definitely a disease as typhoid or tuberculosis.

Not that the child understands this in detail; his attitude is merely pitying rather than condemnatory. He feels much as the small boy I saw the other day in Central Park. They were perched on the railing of the tower, this youngster and a group of his mates, and the little chap was saying ruminatingly: "S'posin' a pore skater was to fall off'n here, a pore, ignorant skater!"

In other words, we are now sending many of those, whom once we would have lumped with sinners, to sanitariums and hospitals, because, when all is said, they are "just pore, ignorant skates." And so the way to heaven is no longer so narrow, and rocky, and lonesome, no longer even one road, but many roads; and sundry good churchmen will tell you that other churches and creeds may help other men—though you, of course, being the elect and enlightened, will recognize and uphold "the true church."

Even as roads to heaven have astonishingly opened up in our day and age, so, also, there are more roads to happiness than in the era of our grandparents. Then men married one, two, even three wives in succession, sometimes rather rapid succession, and fathered anywhere from six to sixteen children. Then women, "happy women," were as inevitably domestic as they were petticoated and two-legged; an unmarried woman over thirty was indubitably and rather tragically an old maid; the wife without children was as

tragically "barren"; while the man or woman without definite religious affiliations was quite inevitably "atheist" or "infidel," and accordingly dreaded or despised.

These descriptive phrases stood for unhappiness, failure, or sheer "original sin"; for if you were an old maid, you must necessarily be stunted and comparatively useless; if you had no children, although married, you had obviously failed in your human mission; and if you disbelieved, or even privately questioned, any of the "truths of revealed religion," you were among those destined as an awful warning in this world, and to a yet more awful punishment in the world to come!

But, you query, are public opinions as to a given person's share of happiness, and the true measure of that happiness, necessarily synonymous? Certainly not, in many cases, and yet the influence of suggestion is so strong that all of us are inclined to reflect what others think of us, of our success or failure, our happiness or misery.

The change in this reflexed public opinion in our day has not only broadened the path to heaven, but it has also sent out many a searchlight upon the path of human destinies on earth. Probably the old maid of the olden time was never half so forlorn as she was depicted in the popular novel and funny page of the early Victorian era, but her lot in 1912 is unquestionably strangely altered. The world has ceased to regard her as a blot on the fair face of creation; indeed, the term, "unmarried woman," in this twentieth century, seems to carry with it no sting, no effect of humor, and not even an intimation of any particular age or type. Nowadays the unmarried woman is a person to be reckoned with—frequently a personage, and there is no longer a conviction in the public mind either that she must ultimately marry to attain success, or that, being what would once have been considered an old maid in age, she may not ultimately marry, despite mature years of single blessedness. For one curious fact about the twentieth-century man is that he no

longer marries a given woman because of her youth, her beauty, or her fortune. Personality has begun to count in modern love, and personality being beyond the realm of mere years, the man of the period is marrying the woman he desires to marry very nearly regardless of her age, assuming, of course, that the woman in question has the one *sine qua non*, the opportunity to know men, and also those qualities which modern men admire in modern women.

Just here I allow for objection, interruption. Am I not overstating the case, intimating that the man of to-day is devoid of an appreciation of youth and beauty, that he cares little for children?

Not at all; I am merely asserting that the modern man is far more of an individualist than were his forefathers. He takes the personal equation more into account, admires youth, and desires beauty, but not as sole assets. He cares for children, often passionately, and desires children of his own. But where his grandfather assumed that the normal man should have a dozen children, he feels that four or five constitute a large family, and that three healthy youngsters means increase.

His grandfather or great-grandfather married a wife, and spared neither her vitality nor her youth; frequently he outlived this wife by twenty or thirty years, and almost invariably wife number one was followed by wife number two, nor was wife number three by any means a rare phenomenon.

Nowadays the divorce court pays inevitable toll to modernity—a man may have three wives living, although the fact is not accounted to his credit—but at least the women of to-day have a better chance of healthy old age than their grandmothers knew, and not wholly because of the gain in medical science. Protected adolescence and fewer children mean a prolonging of youth, a higher average of health. The fact that, at a given age, women now are far younger than they used to be, may account for their being considered marriageable longer than they were in by-

gone years, although this cannot alter the physiological facts as to a woman's child-bearing period.

Yet, in our era of great industrial pressure, the public attitude toward the size of families has altered so materially the world over that the marrying man reflects the situation in that he no longer looks for a wife exclusively among young girls, or even among women between twenty and thirty, because he no longer subconsciously considers the matter of youth as preëminently important.

Indeed, with the growth of modern character and conditions, the very relation between man and woman has undergone a subtle psychological change. Love to-day is different from love as it was known in the Roman era, or in the days of the Hebrew prophets, for love has been as much affected by evolution as the structure of the human body or the *mores* of the various civilized races.

Because of this higher development of love between the sexes, the sum of human happiness has infinitely increased, just as it has increased through the development of religious tolerance.

Yet, paradoxically, with the finer evolution of marriage has come also a situation wherein marriage seems not essential for every one, as it once was regarded, outside of the religious orders; essential, I mean, to insure a full, busy, and useful life. In our finest civilization to-day, a vast army of unmarried women, of unquestioned honor and chastity, make for the common welfare, and, at the same time, stand for personal success, achievement, and contentment.

Frequently, these same women know men extremely well; their friendships with both women and men constitute a certain high adventure of alert and creative minds; they give much and receive much in the way of sympathy, personal admiration, and a certain immensely productive force of enthusiasm, an enthusiasm transmuted, very possibly, from what originally may have been included in the life force.

Inevitably, these professional or

business women of fine capacity and performance lose much if they remain unmarried, and doubtless the world loses also; and yet the law of compensation counts for real gain. For, as one looks into this matter, one sees that the married woman, however spiritually free, is frequently so handicapped by the demands of her home and her offspring that she knows little of these high enthusiasms and valuable friendships possible to the woman who works, but not at the altar of domesticity.

Furthermore, the unmarried woman and the unmarried man have peculiar opportunities to know each other, and to interchange interests and enthusiasms, opportunities nonexistent in an age when the standard of morality was lower for both sexes than it is to-day. Friendships of women for women also take as high rank now as those between men, and yet there was a time when the loves of Damon and Pythias, David and Jonathan, had few parallels among women.

And, finally, the attitude of the world at large toward its children has perceptibly altered.

The child of to-day, as well as the woman, has many friends outside the four walls of home, many vital and beautiful influences beside those purely parental. Children belong to all who love and serve them, to all who understand them because of remembered childhood. A third of a child's life is spent away from the mother who was once all absorbed and all absorbing; and the teacher, the professor, the kindergarten expert, and often the understanding, and childless, adult friend contribute magnificently to the development, the success, and the happiness of the child, and, in turn, to that of unborn children!

So it is that even those who have no children in the literal sense need no longer be exiled from the kingdom of make-believe, the realm of faerie, so dear to the hearts of little boys and girls. Apart from the actual opportunity for ownership in the adoptive sense given by hospitals and orphanages, there is infinite opportunity for

most of us to know children, to help children, to count to them for love and friendship. Moreover, the future race needs our eugenical plan and thought and action, not alone in the matter of bettering the race by selection, but also in that of attending to those who have already swarmed in from Ante Land. Children everywhere need a great deal more competent mothering and fathering than they are getting at present, possibly because, after all, the business of being a parent is about the most complicated, the most difficult, the most varied, and exquisite, and subtle, and limitless, and exacting of all the businesses on this earth to-day!

No wonder the unmarried women are needed on the job, to help busy and weary mothers in the task of mothering wisely, sanely, comprehendingly.

The modern mother, be it said, is not jealous of him or her whom her child loves. For usually she is big enough to recognize her own limitations as well as her own magnificent opportunities; she is as keen to talk of Frank or Dorothy with the wise teacher, or understanding friend, or experienced specialist as the old-time mother was to discuss her children's bodily ills with the family doctor, and their spiritual shortcomings with the trusted clergyman or priest.

In this matter of happiness getting, too many of us set out with a challenge which we fling at fate: I want such and such a thing, we say; if I get that I will consent to be happy; if not, I shall perpetually protest, and grumble, and regret.

It is like the old notion of the path to heaven—only one path, and if you don't find it, you are foredoomed.

But, after all, we are not moderns for nothing; we are, literally, heirs of all the ages. Where some remote ancestor of ours had one chance for development, for enjoyment, we have a dozen. Where he had a little limited circle of interests, and opportunities, and friends, we have the news, and literatures, and arts, and inventions, and social opportunities of the wide world, not to mention our larger friendships, our more

comprehensive loves, our more free and inspiring marriage relations.

We have, moreover, a trained sense of proportion and humor, an eye for color, an ear for music, a tolerance of diverse views in religion, politics, economics; above all, we have an appreciation of the essence and charm of divers human relationships far, far greater than the ancient clan spirit or sense of the blood bond, so limited, selfish, and mentally impersonal.

Again, most of us have also an individual freedom of choice, practically unknown to any but the exceptional man in bygone ages, where a man's work was chosen for him by his overlord, where a woman was possessed by her father, her husband, or her son, where her very garments were chosen for her by the state, and the child of her agony and labor was the property of her master or her husband, however brutal, incompetent, or irresponsible that male creature might be.

Taking, then, the great, slow, dim yesterdays, and comparing them with our own day, we seem indeed happy, until we pass into the gloom cast by the modern novel of realism, so called. This realistic novel, or play, professes to paint life as it is—or as we should see it if we but saw things rightly—a deep jaundice yellow! This realist writer—or shall I call him this pseudo-realistic?—is always very solemn, very earnest, when engaged in producing his realistic masterpieces. Sometimes, in an off mood or a cheerful year, he forgets his mission in this vale of tears, and writes charmingly of life from a wholly different angle—but the outcome of this is not pseudo-realism.

Not long since I read a very long, very clever book by a comparatively young and very famous modern writer; by many, I believe, this novel is considered one of the finest pictures of modern middle-class English life that has been etched by the pen of a fiction writer in half a century.

I read this book eagerly; such cleverness, such character drawing, such a vision of life whole—thus, I am told, has it impressed many minds. I read

and read, more and more impressed, and, truth to tell, more and more depressed! Supposedly this was realism, originality, genius. And then, as I closed the volume at last, a horrible feeling of nausea almost overcame me. Was this really our life, life in the twentieth century, moving, progressive, thrilling, conscious, human existence?—If it was, then I, for one, preferred to die, since there could surely be nothing to live for! If the lives of these people were as your life and mine, then why in heaven do we endure and exist, and even hand on the torch?—since existence means merely breathing, suffering, dying by inches! I thought of this book for days, and not infrequently at night; I remembered the dull, dull lives of the characters, the moving on, day by day, toward tragedy and ultimate decay and agonized death at last.

The writer professed to be showing no unusual picture, no tragical study of brutal industrial conditions, no starving workmen or laborers eaten by mysterious diseases, such as certain forms of industry are said to develop. On the contrary, the tale dealt with prosperous middle-class folk, with enough to eat and wear; people possessed of ordinary opportunities, who should, therefore, have known the joys of youth, the labor and fullness of maturity, the peace and the mellow ripeness of age. But these people had known no real youth, no vision of joy; they moved in a sinister shadow land of continued tragedy from dull, melancholy youth, to dull, disappointed middle life, and so on into dull, melancholy age! Then dully, and with a melancholy resignation, they died, all of them in turn.

It was dreary beyond the telling, and I felt bereft of hope, imprisoned in a grim, blighted horror of a world, a world devoid of children's laughter, without beauty of color and light, or the mystery of thought processes, or the savor and sweetness of love!

I put the book from me—its horrors had been so fascinating I had even re-read parts of it!—when, suddenly, I chanced to look from my window, and my mood changed.

Across my great, ugly, splendid city, a city doubtless packed with just such tragedies as the novel depicted, the sun shone opulently. The sky was one of those crystalline autumn skies that have the brilliance of summer and the clean freshness of early spring. A block away, the voices of children rang crisp and joyous; boys played ball in a near-by field, played with wholesome abandon, quite unintimidated by the solemn warnings of the realist! Far below my window, a girl sat and dried her long, red-brown hair in the breeze, and laughed over a book that must have been delightful. In the yard next door, a very pink-and-white baby went to sleep alone in the open, with a small fist doubled under a round red cheek.

Personally, I was alone in my apartment at the time, but books lined my walls, friendly plants filled my windows, a good picture by a friend rested my eyes with its mellow tints and gracious masses of shadow and light. Across a chair back hung, casually, my husband's gray slouch outing hat; the room was simple, far from luxurious, but it spoke of life, of homely joys, and comradeship, happy hours, hours of work and of rest. Even the chairs, cushioned, but a little shabby and worn, suggested a chronicle of everyday living. One thought of human bodies resting from effort and human minds peacefully contemplating the evening paper, the latest magazine, even the red blossoms in the window. Quite suddenly I knew that the book I had been reading was no more true to life as we know it than the dreary death-notice of some old man is the full and true chronicle of his fourscore years!

Death exists—a commonplace of life—and tragedy and sorrow. We all go down into the shadows more than once, we who live to maturity. But just as my happy little room might convey no idea of content, and well-being, and even sheer joy to the owner of some modern palace of luxury, or to a typical chorus girl whose vision is of material splendors, so the book I had been reading conveys no notion of life as it is lived by normal men and women in the wholesome, normal world.

The so-called realist shows you the hard facts of life, the brutal truth about a man's birth, his business, his marriage, finally his physical decay, and his mortal end. But it conveys none of that delicate atmosphere which, in real life, softens hard and vicious colors; it gives no sense of the rest and peace of each night after the burden and labor of the day; it shows the body of love—its primal nature, brute passions, fierce cruelties; but the soul of love—love's selflessness, tenderness, loyalty, and divine joy—it misses wholly.

In other words, realism is only true when it shows honestly, vividly, subtly, the rare, great moment as well as the long, dull day! And this last is what the pseudo-realist never does, not because he himself has never experienced great moments, but because, after all, he is a literal soul; with him, seeing is believing, and if he knows people who never open to him their hearts, he conceives that they have none, just as he concludes that men who are stoop-shouldered are necessarily stoop-souled as well!

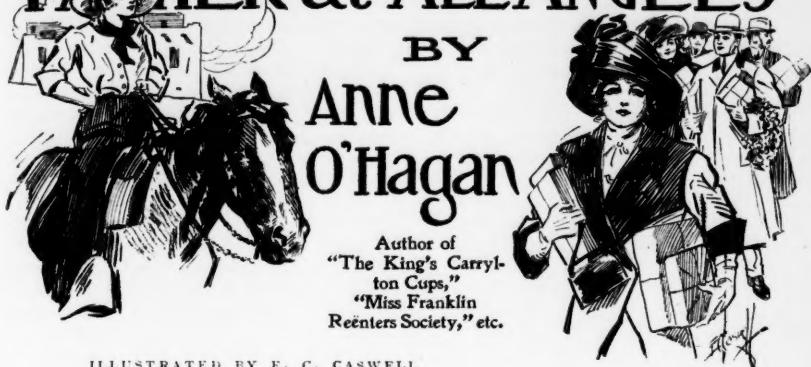
My quarrel with the realist of this order is that so often he has a blind spot in his inner vision; he is the one person who is quite ignorant of the fact that never before in human history have there been so many nests for the comfort and protection of bluebirds as there are to-day! Nor so many ways of snaring the shy, exquisite thing, nor so many opportunities of taming it, persuading it to eat from your hand!

It may be the bird of love or friendship, the responsible mother bird, or the wee chirpy baby bird. It may suggest the thrill of romance, the glory of young love, the delight of little children, or the ambition to achieve and possess; it may be a poetical bluebird, or a mathematical bluebird, or just a domestic, home-making bluebird. The point is that it really exists, somewhere, some time, for most of us; that its color is blue, not black, and that it may dwell for a season with you and with me if we have only eyes to recognize it on sight—and if we are willing to share it with the little lame girl over the way!

# FATHER at ALL ANGELS'

BY  
Anne  
O'Hagan

Author of  
"The King's Carryl-  
ton Cups,"  
"Miss Franklin  
Reenter Society," etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

**A**S the penetrating whistle cleaved the crystalline, blue air of All Angels', Mrs. Lewis Seaton sprang to her feet with a guilty expression. Noon already! She gave a quick look around the undusted room, and moved hastily toward the windows, with the obvious intent of lowering the shades upon the rather glaring disorder of the apartment. But, reaching the one set slantingly in the corner, which commanded a view of the glaring, dusty trail upward to the mines, her hand was stayed upon the curtain cord, and any one who had been favored by a sight of her erect, pliant back, and the section of firm neck visible above the low sailor collar of her blue flannel blouse, would have seen a wave of red advance from the said collar to the graciously curling tendrils of Mrs. Seaton's fine black hair, and up to the tips of her small, closely laid ears. If the hypothetical observer of that blush had reasoned from it to a happy pulsing of blood through Mrs. Seaton's healthy, young frame at sight of a beloved object, he would have reasoned from insufficient data.

It was true that her husband was riding down the trail toward home and his noonday meal. And to the casual eye he was a sight to arouse pleasurable

emotions in the breast of a young wife, as he loped along on his little pinto pony, a long, lean, muscular young figure in his dust-colored corduroy against the dim and ocher background of dusty land cut at its top by the bright blue of the sky. Nevertheless, Mrs. Seaton's blush had not been of pleasure at sight of him, but of anger—righteous, proper, justifiable anger, she told herself—at the sight of the figure riding beside him. It was that of Miss Etta Van Cleek, once of New York, now of All Angels' because of an invalid brother's need of her, and it was not generally held to arouse antagonistic emotions in any observer's heart.

Mrs. Seaton jerked the curtain of the corner window down with a sharp motion of her wrist, and walked back to the lounge chair in which she had been eagerly reading all the morning. She gathered from the floor beside it the pile of pamphlets that had made her forget the flight of time, and threw them in an unsorted heap behind the flimsy curtains of the bookshelves. Her dark eyes were shining angrily, and the red line of her mouth was hostile, bitter. Was it for this that she had given up all that she held dear, her work in the world, her success, her ambitions—to come out to this terrible place and

watch her husband ride down the trail from the mines with that ridiculous Van Cleek girl, whose education, Barbara said to herself, had been limited to the elementary school, and whose ambitions ended with the subjugation of every male human being within the radius of a day's drive?

"Not that I'm jealous!" Barbara assured herself quickly. "If that sort of person represents Lewis' real ideal in feminine creatures, I could feel for him only pity and contempt—never jealousy. But it seems rather a shame that he didn't know his true affinity in time to save me from this unspeakable place."

In this amiable frame of mind she awaited her husband's entrance. It was not long delayed. She heard him in the little corral back of the adobe cottage that was their home, and then his step sounded in the tiny entry. In most of the houses in All Angels' one stepped from the outside world straight into the very midst of family life—sometimes into a combination dining-cooking-and-sleeping apartment. But the Seatons' abode was more complicated than that. Next to the bright-green frame house of the chief superintendent of mines, it was in the general opinion the finest specimen of architectural art in All Angels', and Barbara's open scorn of it was regarded by the other ladies of the community as very ungrateful to Providence and her husband, one of the engineers of the mine.

Lewis entered noisily, with a clanking of spurs.

"Hello, Barb!" he cried, pushing aside the Navaho blanket that guarded the entrance to the living room with brilliant stripes. "Dinner ready?"

He did not offer to embrace his wife. That pleasing marital custom had been in abeyance for a few days, since Barbara had assured him that perfunctory kisses seemed to her an idle waste of time, an hypocrisy and a desecration. He had abruptly ceased his exposition of the difference between the habitual kiss and the perfunctory kiss, and, with equal abruptness, he had abandoned the latter.

"I suppose so," replied Barbara ungraciously, in regard to the dinner. The Van Cleek girl's golden hair must be punished in some way, and to be curt with Lewis seemed the directest method.

They moved out of the little sitting room into the box of a hall, and across that to the tiny dining room opposite. Another bright-colored Navaho blanket was pushed aside, but the oak table was bare. Barbara repressed an exclamation. Lewis did not.

"I'll see what is the matter with Annunciatà," said the former, more than ever enraged with fate for making her appear a careless housekeeper—which she was. Lewis looked ostentatiously at his watch.

In the kitchen beyond the dining room there was emptiness—an orderly emptiness, to be sure, but therefore all the more disturbing. Annunciatà was not orderly as a custom. The enameled dishpan hung on a hook above the table. The dustpan hung on another hook behind the kitchen stove. The stove was ominously cold. No pots steamed upon its black surface, no heated odors were wafted from its oven. Barbara called once or twice: "Annunciatà!" but she called without hope. Then she drew a long breath of indignation, despair, and resolution, and returned to face Lewis with the information that Annunciatà had departed, had taken French leave. She said it sullenly; her manner defied him to hold her responsible for the vagaries of the irresponsible Mexican population of All Angels'. As for Lewis, he looked at her with a frown upon his handsome brows and his fingers on that hateful watch. It was evident that he took credit to himself for his self-restraint when he merely said: "I'll go back to the mess house; Mrs. Dougherty can give me a meal. You'll have to get a Chinaman, Barbara. They don't play you these tricks. If they leave, they find some one else for you."

"I don't like the Chinese as household servants," replied Barbara—as if that had anything to do with the situation, Lewis reflected in exasperation.

"In All Angels' we take what we can get," he informed her.

"I've noticed that. It is one of the greatest objections to All Angels' as a place of residence," she mentioned.

"Oh, damn it all, Barbara!" cried her husband ferociously. "Don't begin on that again. A man has to live where his work is. You ought to have married a Harvard professor or a Wall Street broker—their habitats might have suited you. But, since you are here, I think it a little odd that it never occurred to you to look into the kitchen all the morning to see what that fool of a Mexican girl was doing. It's a rather shiftless way to tend your job, if you ask me."

"I haven't asked you," replied Barbara doggedly. He flung out of the room, out of the entry, and she heard him a moment on the little porch—one of the architectural glories of All Angels'; apparently he had hit his tall head against the olla she had swinging there, for she heard an ejaculation that sounded profane. And then he was busy again in the corral.

Before he set out for the mess hall of the subordinate mining staff he paused for a second in the doorway.

"Barbara," he called sullenly, "where are you going to get your dinner? You oughtn't to go without, you know."

"It's too kind of you to ask!" sneered Barbara. "I shan't go hungry."

Again there was a murmur on the breeze that sounded like a conjugal imprecation, and then he and the pony were off in a streak of dust up the trail. Barbara sat for a while staring gloomily at nothing. Then she carefully set out for herself a nourishing repast of dry biscuits, store jam, and warmish ginger ale, gathered together the

pamphlets of the morning, and proceeded to munch and sip and read.

In the forenoon, those printed words, sent her by her old associates of the Inasmuch Settlement, had had power to charm her into complete forgetfulness of her surroundings; the reports on the



*"And I brought you down something to eat."*

investigations carried on by one of her friends they were—investigations looking toward the advisability of old-age pensions, investigations among the old derelicts of industry, absorbing in their pathos, in their clear, logical call for some remedy for such conditions. But now something had happened to them. The instances couldn't thrill her; the deductions from those instances couldn't cause her to nod an approving

head, to murmur excitedly, as she had in the forenoon: "Oh, yes, yes!" Lewis, Annunciata, the unprepared dinner, the supper possibilities or impossibilities, all obtruded themselves upon her consciousness. She finished the warm ginger ale, and put away the pamphlets. After all, she decided with a martyr's sigh, she couldn't sit there forever. She would simply have to be stir herself, and make some arrangements for meals.

"I was never meant to be a house-keeper," said Barbara to herself. "It's an idiotic superstition that all women must be housekeepers. You might as well insist upon all men's being carpenters. I'm not intended for a house-keeper, and Lewis knew I wasn't when he persuaded me to marry him. I'm a good social worker, I'm a fine investigator, and I can perform certain valuable social services. But I can't make bread. And it's no more just for him to drag me out here, and expect me to be happy and to blossom into a bread-maker, than it would be for me to insist upon his coming to live in the lower East Side of New York, and run a settlement, instead of being a mining engineer. When the world is more civilized, such sacrifices—such wasteful sacrifices—will not be demanded of women."

Somewhat the thought of the blue of Lewis' eyes obtruded itself across a vision of the perfect community in which women should also develop according to their powers, and not merely according to an ancient tradition of their duties. But she dismissed the thought of that brilliant, luminous blueness firmly. "There's no use in being sentimental," said Barbara to herself.

Mrs. Dougherty, of all the small feminine population of All Angels', was her particular help in time of trouble. Mrs. Dougherty always knew of a girl who might be trained into a fairly decent imitation of a servant. "Though I'm not sayin' she won't smother ye in grease if ye don't keep a sharp watch out on her, or poison ye with pepper. But if ye can keep her from doin' that, she has the makin's of a good little girl

in her; an' I saw her mother, who does me washin', a week ago last Sunda', and she told me that she wanted Carmelita to go into service for a little while. Why don't ye be stridin' your pony, Mrs. Seaton, dear, an' ridin' out to their place, an' see her for yerself? It's only about five miles up the cañon, an' a ride'll do ye good after all yer bother. An' stop in here for yer meals, both of ye, until ye get settled again. Sure, it's no trouble at all to me, if ye'll take what the men have, an' I'll fix ye a little table in me own bit of a room."

How often, in the two years of her banishment from civilization, had she heard some such rambling monologue from the stout, shapeless, warm-hearted Irishwoman, whose husband had been killed in a mining accident eight years before, and whom the company pensioned by making her house-keeper for the mess house! Well, Barbara said, she would go up now and try to lure the soothing words, the kindly offers, from Mrs. Dougherty again. She couldn't sit there until supper time, with the reports of Constance Grinnell's investigations among the poor of New York.

She put on her riding clothes of corduroy, and set her sombrero on her head. The looking-glass was not a long one, and gave her back only her handsome head, her clear-cut, intellectual face, and her neck and shoulders. It had been nearly two years since she had seen a full-length reflection of herself, she thought. She wondered if she was losing the art of wearing her skirt properly from the mere inability to see it.

"O—O—O—Mrs. Seaton!" came a long, musical call from the front of the cottage. The mirror promptly gave back a black frown to Barbara's eyes. It was Etta Van Cleek hallooing. For an instant Barbara closed her lips obstinately. She wouldn't answer the girl. She would pretend to be asleep. She would pretend to be away. She would pretend to be dead.

"Mrs. Seaton!" The call was a little more insistent. Oh, well, what was the use? She might as well answer.

"Yes, Miss Van Cleek?" Barbara appeared in the doorway. Etta Van Cleek, in front of the porch, leaned over her horse's side, and quieted his restlessness. As Barbara appeared, she swung a basket from the pommel of her Mexican saddle.

"Mr. Seaton says that you're abandoned again, and I brought you down something to eat. Oh, please take it!" For Barbara had made an instinctive gesture of refusal; that "again" had sounded to her sensitive ears like a call to combat. She flushed, but kept her self-control.

"I really don't want to rob you, Miss Van Cleek," she said. "It isn't fair. Mrs. Dougherty will put us up for a few days, or we can even go to Hop Sing's. Other people seem to survive him. So Mr. Seaton has seen you since our desertion?"

"Yes. Ned saw him riding up and called him in—Ned guessed what had happened. We're so used to it here. We persuaded him to stay and take pot-luck with us. Now really, Mrs. Seaton, you must take that basket—there's nothing much in it. I rode out to Fiero this morning, and got some eggs from my Mexican woman out there—I've divided with you, in case you haven't any. I wouldn't eat Popham's store eggs unless I actually saw the Mexicans selling them to him, and took them from him before he had a chance to get them behind the counter. You know he buys cold-storage eggs from Deming, and pretends they are fresh. I always ride out to my old Anita's once a week, and get all that she has. I met Mr. Seaton riding down as I came by the mine this morning—that was how we knew, when we saw him riding back, that he couldn't have had his dinner."

How transparent and how tiresome she was, with her babble about eggs and accidental meetings! Barbara had forgotten the excuses of the days which were not Tuesdays. Of course, she hadn't troubled herself to keep count of those accidental meetings and rides together. If one had to descend to that sort of thing, one had better give up the whole attempt to preserve one's mar-

riage. Oh, well, she had better take the basket and get rid of the girl.

"You're awfully good, and if you are sure I am not robbing you—" she began.

"Dear Mrs. Seaton! Of course not."

"Then thank you very much. I can't offer to do as much for you some time, I am so poor a cook. But—"

"Ah, you give All Angels' more than cookery!" purred Etta Van Cleek. "You've been a real intellectual stimulus to me, and to many others. I have begun my serious reading again since you came."

"Yes? What are you reading?" asked Barbara, with some curiosity.

"I'm reading George Eliot's novels," replied Etta virtuously, and Barbara repressed a snort.

And that was the sort of girl with whose society Lewis Seaton was content! Barbara was full of scorn as she took the basket back into the house. She was full of scorn even as she lifted its cover and saw the bread and the rolls, the cold beef and the cold ham, the white eggs from old Anita's, and the jar of cheese. That girl satisfied Lewis Seaton's tastes, she told herself. For it would be idle to pretend that all those carefully explained accidental meetings and accidental rides were altogether of Etta's planning! Barbara knew her for a persistent young woman where the admiration of man was concerned, but a man determined not to bestow admiration would have found a way to avoid her importunities. And she, Barbara Seaton, Barbara Leigh that had been, had given up all that she was fitted for, all that she was interested in, all that she enjoyed, to come out here and to enter into competition, in this God-forsaken wilderness, with an Etta Van Cleek. He even ran to her—Lewis to Etta—with the tale of his dinnerless house, of his inefficient wife! Hot tears stung her eyes as she reflected upon the indignity of that.

After she had put away the plunder from the Van Cleek larders, she stood for a moment in frowning thought. Then her face brightened. Why shouldn't she go home for a visit? Why



*"Oh, why don't you say something?" she added in final exasperation.*

shouldn't they try a tentative separation, she and Lewis? Perhaps, if it did not seem wisest, she would not tell him that it was a trial separation. She would let him think her just homesick—which Heaven knew she was!—and eager to spend Christmas with her father. It was more than two years since she had seen her father. It was only natural that she should want to see him. Yes, she would go. She and Lewis were too full of bitterness now, too full of hostility, of criticism, of antagonism born of daily living in narrow quarters, mental as well as material, to form sane judgments about each other or about their life together or their attitude toward each other. Absence, separation, would clear the air between them. Perhaps she would grow homesick for Lewis, would think again, as she had thought that splendid day nearly three years ago, that it was worth the sacrifice of all interests, of all aims, of all friendships and dear associations, just to be with him.

There was a sudden chill for her in the reflection that while absence might restore her waning affection, it might, perhaps, entirely kill Lewis'! He might find Etta Van Cleek and what she represented daily more and more to his liking. Well—even so, it would be better to go, to let the worst happen and to face it. She could no longer lead this life; she would no longer attempt it. At least she would have a visit home. She could fairly see the park, snowy on a bright day, crowded with motors and carriages. She could see the bright windows, the glad throngs, the venders' holly wreaths, the bunches of mistletoe, the make-believe Santa Clauses at the street corners, begging aid for something or other; she could feel the glad, free, human pulse of it all, the kindness in the crowding, the brotherliness of the badinage. And she would sit again with her dear father in his library—she saw the long room, full of books and firelight and mellow lamp-light; she saw the cat on the rug before

the fire, and she smelled of the bowl of mignonette that all seasons saw standing upon her father's desk. He might be able to counsel her out of his wise volumes—no! He was too old-fashioned, too sentimental, to know about the modern woman and her problems. It would be her task gradually to accustom him—if it should be necessary—to the thought of her returning to her own life and her own work. It would be a gradual process—the dear old man was such a romanticist!

She felt almost happy as she planned to return East. It would give her a chance to breathe freely, something that she had never had here, harassed as she had been by many worries in fields foreign to her knowledge, bored by the lack of the sort of interests that had enriched her life at home. Lewis would simply have to consent.

Lewis came home that evening to a house rather tidier than usual, and to a meal very palatable and well served. He was apparently willing to let the friction that had marred his home-coming at noon be forgotten. But Barbara was not. Not that she intended to make any ugly scenes; she had quite decided to be calm, forbearing, patient with his objections to her plan—but firm! She did mean to be firm.

"It's good to be off that infernal night shift for a while," said Lewis, stretching comfortably in a long chair and filling his pipe; the picture of the full-fed and therefore contented male the world over, Barbara thought contemptuously to herself. He was good-looking, though, she admitted; she wished herself a little less keenly aware of his height, and his lean breadth, of the blue glitter of his eyes in the brown of his tanned face, o' the strong, thoughtful forehead, and the well-cut, commanding nose; above all she wished herself less aware of the mobility of his mouth, that always seemed to her, in her tender moments, to keep the eternal look of boyishness, of babyishness, even. In the second during which she collected her forces to tell him of her decision, and to win him to it, she had a weak—a sickeningly weak—wave of

longing for his arms. Merely because he was so good-looking, she told herself scornfully; mere sex attraction, she added, with the frankness of the educated, modern girl, and without any perception of the depths of ignorance her "mere" revealed.

She wondered a little at his oblivion, at his obtuseness. In the days when he was wooing her, he had not been thus unaware of the subtle, atmospheric currents between them—it had been one of his attractions for her that he was so quick to guess the unspoken word, to sense the unformed thought. Well, to-night he was far enough removed from that old self of his. He sat, stretched out in the long steamer chair—she hated its yellow varnish as she hated almost all the furnishings of this temporary abode of theirs—puffing at his pipe, seeming more contented than he had seemed in weeks. Probably it was the good meal that he had just eaten that induced the almost beatific expression on his face—her lip curled scornfully. In spite of her twenty-seven years, she was still young enough to feel contempt for those whose moods were dependent upon their food. The perception, or at least the suspicion, that this was the case with her husband to-night gave her voice an additional crispness, her manner an additional curtness, as she began her speech. That meal had been Etta Van Cleek's handiwork, not hers.

"Lewis," she began, in her nervously incisive way, "there is something I want to say to you." Lewis brought his blue eyes back from an idle survey of the farther wall of the room. He was so far from guessing the momentous nature of her speech that he actually said, nodding his head in the direction of the wall:

"Not so bad, that combination of adobe and oiled wood, is it?"

Barbara disdained to reply to a question so far removed from the subject of her thoughts. Instead, she plunged in with characteristic temerity.

"We haven't been getting on so very well together, have we?" In spite of the pitiable nervousness which engulfed

her as soon as she started upon her talk, she noticed the stiffening of his muscles, the swift, sculptured immobility of his face. In a second he was taut, from the crown of his light-brown hair to the toe of his shabby slipper. It was like the stiffening of the cat at home upon her father's rug when she scented danger. She did not wait for him to reply to her question; indeed, it was evident that he intended no reply, but merely to listen for her further exposition on the theme—to await the further threatening.

"We haven't been," she spoke more firmly now. "I don't say"—magnanimously—"that it's been your fault. It has been mine just as much. But it is the sort of fault, as far as I am concerned, that is too deeply rooted to be overcome by my will. It isn't anything willful in me—it's just that I am not the sort of woman who ought to be married—at any rate, not to a pioneer."

She paused. She hoped desperately for several things—that he would interrupt her with a protest, which would give her something to attack; that he would be rude, overbearing, obstinate, and thus rouse in her the spirit of opposition which lends such strength to a cause; that he would take her in his arms and smother the foolish words upon her lips with kisses—she remembered once in the days of their engagement when he had ended an argument in that satisfactory fashion. But tonight he merely sat tense, hostile, listening. She went on desperately, when the pause had grown too long:

"You see, I'm not a housekeeper. I shouldn't be a very good one even if I lived in the region of markets and vacuum cleaners and employment agencies, but out here I'm absolutely helpless. I don't like this semicamping existence; I hate the ugliness of it. I hate having no one interested in the things in which I am interested. You're not"—she spoke accusingly now—"though you pretended to be or seemed to be or maybe you really were when we were engaged. We ought never to have been married. We have no common interests. I don't understand en-

gineering. You don't care for social service. If I were the old-fashioned woman, the kind of a woman you ought to have married, it wouldn't make any difference; I could be interested in how my bread came out, and in whether or not the curtains would wash; and you could have enjoyed the fruits of my interest. Oh, why don't you say something?" she added, in final exasperation.

"There seems so little to say," he replied, with a new air of politeness. "You are saying it all so completely." She flashed a look of indignation to him, but controlled her voice as she went on:

"We won't gain anything by being rude or satirical. All that I want to do is to find some way out of the tangle. I don't want to quarrel, I don't want to insist unduly upon my own way." Barbara felt rather proud of the high, impartial tone that she achieved. "I on'y want us to talk it out, and to see what is best to be done. Surely you don't believe any more than I do that life is worth living on the terms on which we live it."

"You mean that there has been a good deal of jarring and friction? I'm afraid I cannot deny it. We have seemed to get considerably on each other's nerves, but as this is my first matrimonial offense, I don't know that we are any worse than the average in that regard."

"No worse than the average!" Barbara's voice broke in the intensity of her contempt for the average way of life. "But I have no intention of living as the average do—ruled by habit, not by reason, alternating mutual weariness, criticism—dislike almost—with little waves of the cheapest sort of feeling. And that's what it would soon get to be with us—that's what it has gotten to be. I want to go away. I want to get back to some place from which I can see you and our marriage in the right perspective. I realize that I am not in any condition to make a serious decision now—I am too much fretted, too carping, too frazzled, to be just. I don't want to do anything rash or

hasty. But I want to get away and have a chance to think things over. I have come to the conclusion that it will be best for me to go East for Christmas and the holidays, and perhaps a little part of the winter. We will see each other ever so much more truly, when we are two thousand miles apart, than we do now, cooped up in this eight-by-ten hut, and it won't make any talk or scandal—my going home to father for Christmas. You could take your meals with the Van Cleeks'; I'm sure they would be glad to have you, and certainly Miss Van Cleek's cooking would be a blessed change to you after my attempts and Annuciata's."

He shot a swift glance of surprise and suspicion at her as she made this last proposition. But it was not to that that he replied.

"How about your father?" he asked. "It will be a nasty shock for him. He holds such—well, such antiquated views on the subject of marriage and the home."

"Yes," sighed Barbara. "He does, the dear. His own experience was so ideal, you see. And then, of course, being a clergyman has influenced his point of view. Why, he always refused to marry divorced persons long before it became the rule of the church. But each one must live his own life," Barbara stated firmly. "My father lived his and I must live mine. Of course"—she broke off in her assured speech, and looked at Lewis with a rather desolated look—"I'm by no means sure that anything so ugly awaits us—unless you wish it."

"I? Oh, Lord, no!" But his voice was indifferent. "I'm one of those low-minded brutes who could be contented with the average lot—the mutual boredom that you described so feelingly, and the recurring waves of—what did you call it?—the 'cheapest sort of feeling.' You see, it hasn't seemed to me altogether that way. But let us not consider me. I agree that marriage to a man like me presents a good many trials to a woman like you. You're the only one to be considered, since we haven't any children."

"I won't have you put everything off on me," declared Barbara hotly. "I won't let you pretend to yourself that you are a self-sacrificing martyr in letting me go East while you—eat at the Van Cleeks'." Her manner was somewhat explosive as she reached this climax, and again Lewis shot a quick glance at her. "I'm going because it's best for both of us. And when I've been away long enough to know where we really stand in relation to each other and in relation to what each of us has to do in the world—why, then, if a separation seems necessary, I can't let even my dear old dad's feelings influence me. Of course, unless we do come to that conclusion there's no sense in worrying him."

"I should say not," agreed Lewis warmly. "Dear old man! Why, I'd be willing to put up with you almost indefinitely in order to keep him in his peaceful delusion in regard to our marriage!" It was her turn to dart a quick, suspicious glance at him. Was it possible that he was making fun of her?

"Then you don't object to my going?" She was curiously agitated. Of course she intended to go—she had quite made up her mind to it; but she had expected—well, she hardly knew what she had expected, what she had hoped. Possibly it had been that so decisive a resolution on her part would call forth from her husband such an exhibition of opposition, of loving protest, of penitence for all of his misdeeds, that her resolution would be swept away. And here he was calmly answering her with a polite: "My dear Barbara! Of course I don't object to your doing anything which you have considered so carefully and so wisely as you have this step. When do you think of starting?"

"If José can take me down to Mimbres the day after to-morrow in time for the night train to Chicago, I think I'll go then. That will give me to-morrow to pack in—not that I have much to take—and to speak to Miss Van Cleek about boarding you." She spoke with an exaggerated vivacity.

"Oh, don't bother about that. I can



*He laid an affectionate hand upon a shoulder of each.*

manage with Mother Dougherty's grub. I have to go back to the night shift anyway, after New Year's, and of course I couldn't bother the Van Cleeks then with my weird hours."

There seemed nothing more to say. They sat in the little room, looking across the narrow space toward each other, but seemed to see each other from a great distance. By and by he reached out and took a volume from the cluttered center table, and began to

read. And she bestirred herself and searched ineptly through her workbasket for an unfamiliar piece of sewing. At least the search had sufficed to conceal from him the fact that her eyes were full of tears.

Though All Angels' lacked some of the conveniences of modern life, it was not destitute of all. For instance, though there was but one hotel besides Mother Dougherty's mess for some of the mining staff, and only one restaurant, Hop Sing's, there were seven saloons in which miners and cowboys from the neighboring hills could quench their thirst; and although the only railway was a single-track ore line for transporting metal to the smelter at Mimbres, and not for the transportation of any passengers, except such stalwart souls as did not object to riding in the engine cab or on top of heaps of undissected copper and earth, there was a telephone service among the various houses and the mines. It was while she was packing the next day—it having been discovered that José could carry her to Mimbres, since she was not sufficiently hardy to choose the other means of reaching that railroad center—that the telephone rang. She went

somewhat impatiently to answer it. There had been a time when its jangle had filled her with alarms lest the message be that Lewis had been hurt in the mines; but now she knew that it was much more likely to be Mrs. Constantine, who lived at the hotel, and who survived Hop Sing's cooking, asking if she had a pattern of the blouse she had worn the Wednesday before last, or Etta Van Cleek to beg that she and Lewis would come and play bridge that

evening, or that impossible Mrs. Martin proposing a dreary picnic up the cañon. She wondered which of them it would be now.

It was, however, Lewis. It seemed to her that there was a curious note of excitement, studiously repressed, in his voice.

"See here, Barbara," he began; "here's the dickens of a mess. They've just telephoned up a message from the telegraph station from your father. It was probably meant for you, but you know how stupid they are. It seems he is starting to-day to pay us a visit. Hold on a minute, and I'll read it to you: 'Lewis Seaton'—oh, well, never mind that. 'Leave to-night for All Angels' to spend Christmas with you. May stop over in Chicago for hymn-book revision committee meeting. Will arrive before Christmas, anyway. Will telegraph again en route.—Dudley Leigh.' Isn't that the darndest?"

"Oh, Lewis!" Barbara's voice was a compound of surprise, exasperation, and—could it possibly be relief? "What shall we do? I can't go now, can I?"

"Of course you can't go now. Think of the dear old fellow braving the perils of the unknown in this fashion! Has he ever been farther west than Philadelphia before? Well, I'm sorry your plans have miscarried, but we'll have to make the best of it, and give the governor as fine a time as the limited resources of All Angels' permit. You can go back with him, you know. It need only mean deferring your project two or three weeks. Shall I countermand the order to José?"

"No," answered Barbara, with surprising energy. "I've got to go to Mimbres, anyway, to get some things, if dad is coming. We've got to make that spare room look a little less like a crow's nest. I'll get some curtains for it—oh, and a lot of other things. And canned goods—we are dreadfully low on some of them. And I might even manage to secure some sort of a slavey—just to tide us over father's visit—he is a sybaritic old dear, though he has no idea of it, and thinks himself the original exponent of the simple life."

## CHAPTER II.

The Reverend Doctor Dudley Leigh had evidently allowed the affairs of the committee on hymnal revision to engross him very little, for six days after his astonishing telegram had arrived, José's team was again requisitioned for the thirty-mile drive through the desert to Mimbres. They were the busiest six days that Barbara had known since she came to All Angels'. Lewis had said to her daily: "What a good time you and your father can have! He'll tell you all the news of New York—of that New York that you and he are so fond of. All about the Inasmuch Settlement and Constance Grinnell's work, and the hearing at Albany on woman's suffrage and before the alderman on swimming pools and open-air schools. You can have a regular debauch of 'social' gossip."

To which Barbara had replied absently: "Tell me, Lewis, do you think that pair of muslin curtains is very uneven? I'm going to loop them back, you know, and then they won't look so queer. Wasn't I in luck to get that poor Delia Maloney in Mimbres? She's really a dream of a cook! And I'd have missed her if it hadn't been for my settlement training in investigating things that seemed none of my business. There she sat in the station, looking so forlorn, and wiping her eyes with her little ball of a wet handkerchief. And I couldn't help asking her, when I went in to see about dad's connections from Chicago, what the trouble was, and if I could help her. If ever a human impulse was so richly rewarded before, I never knew it. Think of it, Lewis—to come away out here to see her sick brother at the Fort Greeley Hospital, and to find him already gone when she arrived—dead and buried, and to be starting back alone and broken-hearted, and almost penniless! It is the most pathetic thing I've heard in this whole land of tragedies. And to think that what we get out of it is a faithful and devoted cook!"

"You're right in calling this a land of tragedies," Lewis had replied. "Say,

do you think that cot we've rigged up in the governor's room is going to be wide enough?"

"It's the widest thing we can get in there," replied Barbara dubiously. "He isn't very stout, you know."

"Yes, but think of that ancient ark of a bed in which he reposes at home! Why don't we let him take my room, and use the other one just for a study? I can—bunk anywhere," he added lamely.

"He must try the spare room, anyway at first. If it doesn't seem to work—" She broke off. It was difficult to explain to a husband with whom she was living on terms of suspended hostility that none of their household arrangements must be allowed to suggest to her father any rift within the lute.

The doctor was blandly, completely sure that all was well with his dear children, as he called them both. They had promised each other to play, as far as in them lay, the part of a devoted young married couple during his visit. It would be time enough to disillusion him when it was absolutely necessary. Meantime, everything that could be done—"without hypocrisy," Barbara had stipulated—to keep him happy must be done. She didn't know quite how far toward insincerity Lewis' noonday greeting, after the doctor's arrival, had tended. Certainly, after he had shaken his benignant-looking father-in-law by both hands, and had bidden him welcome with hearty voice and shining face, he had turned toward his wife and thrown a casual arm about her shoulders, and had bestowed a casual kiss upon her dark hair. It had not been exactly a passionate salutation, but it had thrilled Barbara, and had made her blush to the very roots of the kissed hair. It had left Lewis, also, with a look of excitement in his blue eyes.

The doctor and his daughter had had their fill of gossip during the afternoon. All the causes that had been dear to Barbara's heart in the old days were discussed; all the doings of her fellows were reported. Constance Grinnell had seemed unduly conceited, had she, over

the reception of her report? What a pity! But perhaps she would come out of that stage of development. And Lilian Durwin, who had made such a wonderful success of the Sunshine Settlement, was going to marry a shady broker, was she? How horrible! What on earth had happened to her?

"It is plain enough what happened to her," said the doctor mildly. "She had been leading her life too long—it was a noble one in a way, but it wasn't a normal one. Not for the average woman. Or the average man. And suddenly the normal feelings of the average woman, after years of starvation, demanded sustenance, and the crooked little man—who was one of her financial backers, by the way—happened to be on hand. It's the want of the normal life that's the matter with all of them—the normal life with its close-knit affection, and its little daily jars and daily tempests and daily sunshine. I don't say that the spectacular reforms of the world must be accomplished by married men and women, but I do say that the bulk of all the work, reform and every other kind, must be done by them. Heaven knows they are very far from perfect, but there's—well, I should call it a reasonableness—about even their imperfections. By the way, what a nice-looking girl that one is you have in the kitchen. I was much surprised, and, to tell the truth, somewhat relieved, to find her there. I had dreaded lest you were having your cooking done by a Chinaman, as I am told is frequently the case out here. A Chinaman is doubtless a man and a brother, but somehow I cannot bring myself to relish the thought of him as a cook and a chambermaid."

Barbara, sitting beside him on a low stool, laughed and patted his hand. "So it's heredity," she said. "I feel that way about them, too, and I've wondered at myself. I rather pride myself, you know, on being very reasonable. But heredity is a perfectly good reason for any queerness in one. I shan't bother to correct it any longer. But about Delia—" and she told him the story of her cook.

"What a field for work there must be out here," said the doctor musingly. "So many sick, so many uneducated, so many homeless and forlorn! Not as complicated as our problems in the great cities, but even more touching, more appealing. Don't you find it so?"

Barbara had just replied, rather coldly and defensively, that she had no time for social work in All Angels', when Lewis made an unexpected return to his house. His eyes still held their glitter of excitement as he told what brought him home at the unusual hour; and once more he shook Doctor Leigh's hand with great, if somewhat jocular, cordiality, and once more he kissed his wife, this time a little less casually, and a little more deliberately than before. Barbara, brightly rosy, stood behind her father to send her husband a glance of indignation and reproach. He quite failed to get her message. Instead, he told them how much they looked alike, and turned them toward the little mirror on the wall between the windows, that they might study for themselves the strong resemblance between them; and in doing so he laid an affectionate hand upon a shoulder of each, and thrust his own handsome face above theirs, until the mirror reflected a family group consisting of a clear-cut, kindly-looking old gentleman, a clear-cut, rosy-red young woman, and a triumphantly mischievous-looking young man.

All Angels', to do it justice, was eager to pay respect to its new guest. People came to call—Mrs. Constantine and the impossible Mrs. Martin among others, and Barbara had an opportunity of seeing what her father succeeded in drawing out of these ladies. Really, under his skillful manipulation, quite desirable qualities appeared in each of them. What a dear old man he was! How every one responded to his gentleness, his faith, his sweetness! Why, even that vain, admiration-loving Etta Van Cleek had actually acted like a normal human being in his presence, and had made none of her little coquettish advances to Lewis. And Lewis, by the way, had seemed almost unaware of

Etta Van Cleek's presence, and had spent most of his time in surveying his wife with a quizzical expression.

Each day of the wonderful visit was full of its own excitements. Each day brought some new piece of daring from her husband which she was not able to rebuke. Indeed, Lewis never gave her an opportunity to rebuke him. He saw her only in her father's presence. As soon as the doctor had announced in the evening his intention of going to his own room, Lewis immediately dropped his loverlike pretenses, and, yawning mightily, declared himself also ready for bed. Then the door of the room in which he had taken refuge at the beginning of their estrangement would be immediately closed upon him and a careless "good night." It made Barbara burn with shame and anger that he should treat her so—that he should embrace her freely, if commonplacely, in the presence of her father, and then should flee her presence at once. He would join her on the sofa, her father seated by the center-table light, and he would seek and find her hand and hold it until every nerve in her body quivered. She could not jerk it away—that would be to reveal the true state of affairs to the doctor; Lewis' attitude was the most easy, the most natural in the world, sprawled out against the cushions on the lounge and absent-mindedly holding her fingers as he talked politics and mining. The intimate touch, the implied affection and unity—these did not seem to agitate her husband as they did her. She resented it that he could play his part so easily, so unconcernedly, while she was so shaken and torn by it. And he never gave her a chance to rebuke him for his overplaying of his part! She wasn't sure that she could rebuke him even if she had the chance. For would not a rebuke imply that the whole farce meant more to her than to him, that for her it was becoming a tragedy?

The worst of it was she was not sure that it was not a tragedy to her. She knew she dreaded the day when her father should leave, whether she went with him or remained behind. For in

either case his departure would be the signal for the end of the play.

"I think I shall go on to California for a little visit, after I leave you two dear children," observed the doctor one day after New Year's. "The West is a very interesting country, and I do not find travel in it so laborious as I had expected. I may stay until spring in southern California, and then perhaps I could have another little visit with you on my return trip." He beamed at them benevolently through his glasses. "How would that suit you?"

Barbara stole one frightened look at Lewis. Would he dare to show any disapprobation of the plan, any impatience at the delay in her leaving? She encountered his glance upon her, burning, questioning, passionate. A wild tumult seized her. She heard herself babbling some foolish words of pleasure in her father's intention, she heard Lewis' more robust assurance of his approbation.

"It won't be so bad to leave you, if I think that I'm going to see you again in a few months," said the old man. "Let me see—if Miss Van Cleek can arrange things, I shall be able to leave here in about a week—"

"Miss Van Cleek?" cried Barbara and Lewis in a breath.

"Yes," said Doctor Leigh, looking slightly surprised. "Don't you both know? She is going to marry that assistant of Lewis—young Frazier, and she wants me to stay to perform the ceremony. It's to be as soon as a wedding dress arrives from Chicago, or something of that sort."

Barbara looked questioningly at Lewis. "Did you know?" she asked. He shook his head.

"But I guessed something," he said, "from the number of errands that she had in the direction of the mine, and the number Frazier had in town."

So it had been for an absolutely unfounded suspicion, for a baseless jealousy, that she had placed herself in this ridiculous position with her husband, where she could not stay in his house and feel that it was her home, and where she could not leave it with dig-

nified excuse. And oh, how she wanted to stay! How she wanted to translate the high comedy of the last few weeks into earnest!

It was she who dressed the bride—so much at least she could do in extenuation of her injustice. It was she who shed the tears that relatives and nearer friends are supposed to shed at weddings. It was she who, as she kissed the bride, murmured with an unusual sincerity that she hoped she would be happy, that she believed she would be happy. And then she drove to Mimbres with her father and her husband, more uncertain than a girl waiting for her lover's first declaration. How would she and Lewis treat each other when the doctor had gone?

They were nearing that center of civilization when the doctor leaned forward from the back seat of José's stage to speak to Lewis sitting with the driver on the front seat.

"I really have a lot to thank you for, Lewis," he said. "We old people get into such ruts—it's a great mistake. Now, I've thoroughly enjoyed this trip—it's done me a world of good, mentally and physically, but it never would have occurred to me to take it if it hadn't been for your telegram."

Lewis sought his wife's eyes with a mingled look of pleading and defiance. She was rosy and triumphant.

"Why, dad," she said, "I didn't know Lewis had telegraphed you!"

"Bless my soul! I'm a dunderhead. He told me not to mention it. But it's done now, and no great harm that I can see. He telegraphed me the same day I sent the answer; he begged me to come out because you were homesick."

Their eyes met again, and each questioned the other. When that long look was over, Lewis put his hand across the back of the seat, and reached for Barbara's. She met it, and awkwardly he managed to bend backward until he could reach it to kiss.

"Well, whether you had to be sent for or not, your visit has been a great success, dad," he said, and Barbara cried, in a voice that broke: "Oh, it has, it has!"



# The Millionaires

by  
Kate Jordan

Author of "Time the Comedian," "The Spirit of the Road," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

THE basement dining room of the boarding house was empty except for four people. Mrs. McGregor, the tired mistress of the place, and Miss Ganzemuller had finished dinner, but were sitting stodgily on—the former a stout widow, whose aim in life was to keep out of bankruptcy; the latter a drab-complexioned, middle-aged librarian with a thin-lipped, satirical mouth and bored eyes. Both of these were in sharp contrast to the two facing each other at the opposite extreme point of the long, sagging table, lingering over the coffee in the heavy cups. Arnold Brett was twenty-five, a big, swaying-shouldered, black-haired young giant, his face flashing with ideality and purpose. Hetty Trecartin was a few years younger, and the why and wherefore of her ability to earn her living as a model for "ideal heads" to a fashionable photographer was seen at a glance—she was a latter-day Psyche, as blond and ethereal in her velveteen blouse and short skirt as if she wore shivery cobweb filaments and the useless wings of a butterfly.

The room was absolutely still except for the partially guarded voices of the young people, and, hardly aware that

they were listening, the two elders at the other end sat crumbling bread under their fingers, their gaze growing more and more attentive.

"I had a story to illustrate this week," said Arnold, "and I was mean enough to snitch you for it. Do you mind? I've been making sketches of you on my cuff ever since I came here, a month ago. I hope I haven't offended you, Miss Trecartin—but, you see, it was such a temptation."

"Why, I'm flattered, Mr. Brett—really I am," the girl said, an excited catch in her silvery voice. "It's an honor to be sketched by an artist instead of having a camera leveled at you." And she laughed for no reason except that she was very happy.

"You are a perfect Greuze type," Arnold said dreamily. "You might have sat for 'The Broken Pitcher.'"

She glowed, though she shook her head.

"That's too much. I think the girl in 'The Broken Pitcher' is the sweetest thing!" She leaned nearer, and asked with intense interest: "I suppose you are only happy when you're creating?"

"It is my life," the boy said. "Of course, I mean to get away from pen



*—“and a poor man I will never marry.”*

and ink. I've saved three thousand dollars. I'm going to Paris very soon to study painting. To have a picture in the Salon—that's what I live for!" he said, in a burning tone. "Have you an ambition, Miss Trecartin?"

The feathery gold topknot of her hair fluttered as her head drooped; she smiled enigmatically. "I have no talent, but I have an ambition. I want to be rich—rich. I was meant to be. Everything that's beautiful and luxurious seems to be mine by right. Luxury would not be strange to me," she added passionately. "Poverty is the thing that I don't belong to, that I hate from my deepest soul." She brought out the last words in the tone of an actress that she had heard the week before in a tragedy at a Broadway theater.

He looked at her with an artist's appraisement. "Yes, you suggest all the delicate, delicious things—I can see you

swathed in furs, your limousine car filled with foot warmers and fresh flowers, a silky dog, worth its weight in gold, cuddling up against you. I can see you—"

"Oh, don't!" she cried, clasping her hands in comic despair. "You will make me discontented; I'll lie awake dreaming of all the things I can't have."

"You inherit your tastes probably. At one time, far off in England," said Arnold, leaning on his elbows, his tone dreamy, "it is quite likely that your family were lords of the manor, and a fair lady—perhaps your counterpart—often swept through the banquet hall in velvet and pearls, while minstrels played in the gallery. You see, your name is a very aristocratic one—Trecartin—Cornish, I think."

"I don't know. I never heard," said Hetty musingly, but with excited eyes. "But I wish it would come *true*, Mr. Brett. I'd rather inherit a fortune

from some rich uncle who advertised for me," she smiled, "than have to marry some rich man that I wasn't really and truly in love with."

"But you wouldn't do *that*—surely?"

She looked defiant, remained thoughtful, then nodded. "Yes. If a rich man should ask me to marry him I'll hardly have such luck as to be in love with him—and a poor man I will never marry. So there you are! How am I ever to have all that makes life worth while, then, unless I marry wealth—or find myself a long-sought heiress? You see, it's different with you, Mr. Brett. You're a man, and you have your *art*." He looked fittingly serious as she underscored this word. "You can be like 'The Lord of Burleigh,' if you please—after you are a rich and famous painter—and lift even a beggar maid to your side."

He shook his head slowly and vigorously, so that the thick, lustrous hair trembled like dark leaves upon it. "I shall never marry," he said, in a small, decisive, shut-in voice. "Rich or poor—famous or obscure—I shall never marry."

"You are wedded to your art," she said, in a little breath.

"Absolutely—and I have made Kipling's lines my watchword: 'He travels fastest who travels alone.'"

They sat silent then, each looking down a line of thought; at the end of his, a great picture in a vast, sun-hot gallery, a breathless crowd clustered about it; at the end of hers, "perfumes, soft textures, lace, a half-lit room."

"I hope you get your dream," Hetty said, at last.

Arnold came back to the real—to the stale tablecloth, the drained coffee cup, the snow in frozen, soiled heaps upon the sill of the basement window, and to the girl opposite, who, as she rose from her seat, wistful, swaying, suggested a human lily. "I hope you get yours," said Arnold.

They went out, the girl first, the boy—after a vacillating pause—following. The boarding-house keeper gave Miss Ganzemuller a smile that had a pensive, scornful criticism in it.

"Ah," she murmured, "they are different from the young people of *my* day. You heard them? Nothing but ambition and money!"

"It's a buying and selling age," snapped Miss Ganzemuller. "The youngest has a price for whatever he or she possesses. There are no dreamers left in the world—there's no romance."

Arnold had stepped back, meaning to speak to Mrs. McGregor, but before he reached the door, he heard this judgment of Hetty and himself. He halted, a hushed, wondering look on his face. This changed to a frown, with a hardening of the eyes and mouth, as he turned away and went upstairs.

It was Christmas Eve. The snow was falling just as every Christmas card and melodrama and love story always shows it falling on this wonderful night of nights—it came down windlessly in straight lines and in big, thick, flannel-like flakes—"wudges," Hetty called them. She was with Arnold in an elevated train, being whirled to a Christmas party given at The Art Workers' Fraternity. This society was for the benefit principally of young girl models. Very rich, kind men and women supported it. Hetty was a member, and, having been privileged to ask a friend to the Christmas dance, she had asked Arnold.

She had never seen him before in his evening clothes, and in her thoughts described him as "handsome as a big young Russian prince." He had never seen her before in party dress. When he had wrapped the old gray ulster about her in the hall of the boarding house, his eyes had fairly ached as they drank in her vernal, ethereal beauty. It was only cotton net that she wore, only wax beads around her throat, only a wreath of artificial lilies, Greek fashion, about her head; but she seemed to swim in a cloud, and it did not matter that the beads were not pearls, for they circled a throat that seemed a column of solid cream molded on swaying, flower-stalk lines; and it did not matter that the lilies were false and cheap,

for the face under them might have been "the blessed damozel's," only with the yearning and flame of earth in it.

Arnold was very quiet as he sat in the train beside Hetty. It was a silence that was hungry, throbbing, and it communicated itself to her. It did not really signify, of course, for Arnold was poor, and, moreover, had determined to walk the path to fame alone, unshackled; yet it was glorious just to dream vaguely, just to be happy.

How seldom he looked at her! His stormy eyes avoided the crimson and snow of her mouth as she laughed. Her woman's instinct told her that he was battling hard against her charm, and the caution that, so young, she had learned from life made her think this wise; but she could not help a gladness that he had to fight himself. And surely until the man came who was to give her the things she had come to appraise as "worth while," she could safely luxuriate in the fire of his discontented eyes, watch the curve of his cheek, and thrill at the occasional pressure of his arm against hers as the train lurched them on over the glistening rails, through the magic of the electric-shot white night.

The battle ended in determined words as they left the train and plunged through the snow. "I'm leaving for Paris in a few days," Arnold said doggedly.

Her recognition of his "wisdom" did not prevent a feeling of sickness sweeping like a breeze through Hetty. "To study, of course?"

"Yes; and I'll have to shave the money pretty close; but I don't care. You can get cheap little apartments, the fellows say, on the left side of the Seine——"

"Where Trilby lived," she breathed longingly.

"They're up what in New York would be called alleyways; but the air is throbbing with art there, and the white fire burns in you."

"And you are starting all alone?" she asked, in a dull, dreary tone.

"No; Phil Tway is going along; we'll share; there may even be a third fellow

to divvy on expenses. The more the cheaper."

A gust came suddenly out of the east, and sent her against him—a soft, perfumy bundle. She looked up at him, the frosty night's glamour sparkling, crystallike, from her face.

"I envy you," she said in a little voice.

"But *you'll* go to Paris some day." His laugh had a faint, hard scorn in it. "Yes, some day *you'll* cross from the right side of the Seine, where the palaces are. You'll come in your limousine car, and, after much trouble, you'll find the hole where, half fed, I'm hiding and fighting, and you'll buy one of my canvases—even if you *don't* like it—just to give a poor fellow a helping hand, and for *auld lang syne*."

He laughed again in the same way, while feeling a numb amazement at his own cruelty and bitterness. Hetty did not reply. The laugh had made her soul feel small and her heart sad. Silently they went through the big vestibule into the lighted fraternity house.

Arnold had not been ten minutes in the place before he saw that Hetty was the loveliest of the scores of pretty girls there, and held a recognized palm for beauty. She was like a fairy queen among a troop of equally gauzy subjects. As he watched her moving about with rapid, birdlike grace, the cloudiness of her gown standing out from the youthful, swordlike slenderness of her body, he became aware that one man—a man of perhaps forty, with a serious, studentlike face—was constantly beside her. When she came to Arnold with her dancing card, he saw what must be the stranger's name scrawled upon it five times, for it was the only name there.

"Who's your friend?" Arnold asked, in flippant scorn, his tone an unconscious demand.

"Mr. Fairchild, our president; I've known him a long time."

"You let him monopolize you." Still he did not write his name. "Gave him even the *first* dance!"

"I was afraid—I didn't know what to say—he has been so kind to me—I



*A gust came suddenly out of the east, and sent her against him—a soft, perfumy bundle.*

didn't want to offend him," Hetty stammered.

Arnold's stormy eyes looked past her at the offender. "I don't see why old men keep on dancing," he said contemptuously. "I bet he'll walk all over you."

Mr. Mortimer Fairchild approached. The music had begun a rapturous two-step.

"Our dance, Miss Trecartin," he said, with a crisp, smiling authority, ignoring the big young man in whose eyes

there was what Hetty called "the hurt-dog look."

"I'll leave the card with you, Mr. Brett," said Hetty wistfully. "Take whatever dances you want."

Arnold handed it back with stern politeness. "I seldom dance," he said, "but thank you just the same." As Mr. Fairchild led Hetty off, he turned on his heel.

He was ashamed of what he had done. How rude he had been! How could he have hurt her so? How pite-

ously she had looked at him! Of course, he wanted to dance with her; he had been dreaming of that delight from the moment she had asked him to come. What was the matter with him? His hands, thrust in his pockets, were clenched and as cold as the night, which, in the grip of a sudden eastern gale, now roared at doors and windows. His heart was searing him, hammering in a fierce way, yet now and then missing a beat that his excited throat seemed to swallow.

"Hasn't she the right to dance with whom she pleases?" he demanded, furious at himself. "Of course she has! Then what's the matter with you, you confounded idiot? Get back to earth!"

He avoided the dancing parlors, and strolled into some of the smaller rooms, where older men stood about, looking at etchings and flower studies on the walls—for the members were recruited from artists as well as from models. Fully an hour after his rude speech to Hetty, he found himself gazing moodily at the snow from the window of a back room. This also looked down upon an angle of the house that was used as a studio, and was filled to-night with plants and lanterns. He glanced carelessly toward it, and then his body gave a start and remained rigid.

In the tinted light among the maze of palms, he saw Hetty and Mr. Fairchild. They had evidently just swung in there from a dance. The man was saying something that held her spell-bound—something evidently very serious and very respectful. Arnold saw her put her hand to her head in a confused way and turn from him a little; she paused so, thinking, the man watching her with a sober, courteous intensity. A few moments that seemed to stretch into infinity held this picture; then Hetty turned back hesitatingly, falteringly put out her hand. The man took it, held it first in both of his while bending nearer and speaking with emphatic movements of the head. After a quick, careful look over his shoulder, he caught Hetty with nervous eagerness, and, bending back her head, kissed her as one who had the right.

Everything went black before Arnold. It was exactly as if for a second the lamp of life had gone out. When he could move, he rushed from the room. He did not see what had followed the kiss—that Hetty had pushed the man with the proprietary manner from her, and, shrinking back, her hands to her head, had said wild words that had made him look at her in appeal and protestation. A moment later, and the man stood there alone, gazing after a whirl of gauze and lily-crowned golden hair.

"She does not need me now. She has some one to take her home—in a motor, no doubt," was Arnold's burning, breathless thought as he lurched on his ulster, made a lump of his soft hat in his fierce clutch, and went down the stairs.

There was a pause in the dancing, and a woman's voice was singing:

"Oh, merry go the days when the heart is young!  
There's naught too high to climb when the heart is young!  
A spirit of delight scatters roses in its flight,  
And there's magic in the night  
When the heart is young—is young!"

"It's a lie!" he said, an unacknowledged sob hurting his dry throat as he stepped into the storm. "There can be horror in the night when the heart is young—can't there, though!" he went on blindly. "Selling herself—selling herself! Yes, he's that Mortimer Fairchild, worth millions, always dabbling in art, but not able to paint a stroke, or model even the joint of a little finger, himself. She will have what she wants now—everything." Her exquisiteness, her delicate, glowing tints, the *youngness* of her, all rushed in memory over him, and, with a feeling of horror that had the gold of pity in it, he reeled weakly. "Oh, Hetty, Hetty—to sell your winsome self—to sell——"

He came to a dead pause on a street corner. A question had come hurtling out of the heavens, it seemed, and was pummeling him, turning his soul sick:

"And what better are you? Oh, mighty young judge, are you not selling

the hymns of the soul for something just as hard as gold? If a woman loved you, if you loved her, have you not decreed to cast out such love as weakness, as a stumblingblock, and go your self-sufficient, selfish way alone? Look to yourself, you who could sell the cry of your own heart and the cry of a woman's for the sound of your name in the market place!"

It was true. He stood there trembling, the snow whirling about him in spirals. As the pavements gave out no sound, he was not aware that Hetty had followed him until she stood at his side.

"I saw you leaving, and I hurried after you," she said. Her breath came stiflingly; there was no light in her lifted face.

"I didn't mean to spoil your evening," Arnold said softly, in the new humbleness that had come upon him. "I—I—happened to see you with Mr. Fairchild in the conservatory—so knew he would take you home."

He saw a shudder go over her; her eyes looked away from his face. "I—tried—to make myself marry him," she said, in a little, shamed voice.

"Well?" The one word was like a bubble from his heart that, as he looked at her, began to fill with a sense of glory.

"I couldn't. When he kissed me—I knew. I had never known so surely before. Love should mean marriage—and marriage love. I told him so. Then I ran away from him."

Arnold drew her arm through his. They walked on to a patch of street not far from Fifth Avenue, where the shadow was soothingly thick. He wheeled to her there, and brought his hands down tenaciously upon her shoulders.

"You couldn't marry him. Could you marry me—if you tried?"

Oh, the fire and sweetness of her young mouth upon his! "I don't have to try, Arnold. I am yours!"

And then, a little later: "And you think I won't be a burden to you?" she cried joyously.

"I was a fool," he said conclusively,

the splendor and strength in his face maturing it. "Do you know, Hetty, I believe I'll be able to put something *real* into my work now—something that would always have escaped a cold and selfish heart."

Unmindful of ills or aches, they sat down on the padded whiteness of steps before a shuttered mansion, their arms about each other. There was not a living thing in the white, phantasmal wilderness but their two selves.

"And I'm going to Paris with you?" the girl whispered.

"To Paris," he said, with defiant joy.

"And I'll be the third in the little apartment, and cook the dinners. I do wonders on the chafing dish."

"Only two—now—in that apartment—*us*," he said. "I'll work harder to pay for it, that's all." He ended with a ruminative little laugh. "I wonder what Mrs. McGregor and Miss Ganzenmuller will say when they find that Cupid is doing business at the same old stand?"

"What do you mean?" Hetty asked, in surprise; and he told her of the criticism he had overheard.

"Well, we did sound horrid," she declared. "Besides, Mrs. McGregor really loved her sailor husband, and Miss Ganzenmuller only brings home love stories from the library where she works; she's just full of romance, poor dear, but hides it."

"Let's get them on a string first," said Arnold gayly. "Let's say we've both come into fortunes, and then watch their faces."

Hetty looked both daring and demure. "But that wouldn't be even the littlest kind of a fib."

"Eh?" he asked vaguely.

"Aren't we rich?" she questioned, with fierce tenderness. "Haven't I inherited you, and you inherited me? Aren't we very, *very* rich?"

"Sure thing—we're millionaires!" Arnold cried, and tried to get all her sweetness into one full kiss.

There was a silver jangle of Christmas bells from a church on the avenue—and this pealing and the snow swept the millionaires on together.



# The Mysterious Lavender Notes

by

## Edith Summers Updegraff

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ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. PUGSLEY

BETTY—Theo—do for goodness' sake look at what I found on my window sill this morning!"

Theodosia and I were busy turning our mattress. At St. Agatha's, before the breakfast bell rings, you're supposed to "Turn the mattress, smooth the under sheet, and spend five minutes in silent devotional exercises." Our mattress weighs seven tons, so we only looked around and grunted as Vivian rushed into the room waving a sheet of pale lavender paper.

"Oh, feathers! Never mind the stupid mattress! Who do you suppose it can be?"

"Who what? How do I know? Lemme see."

I took the lavender paper from Vivian's hand, unfolded it, and read:

BEAUTIFUL VIVIAN: I have singled you out. I have watched you. I love you. This is the first note, but it will not be the last. As often as my arduous labors will permit—for I have labors that are most arduous, and that must be performed under cover of the night—you will find a little lavender token on the sill of your casement. When you find it you will know that I have been near you in the heart of the night at great risk and peril to myself.

Loved one, I dare not ask for a reply. But if you should deign to vouchsafe such, place it where you found this, and rejoice

the heart of one who will forever be most devotedly yours.

"Umph!" was all I said, as I handed it over for Theo to read.

"Betty Watson, is that all you've got to say?"

"It's all I've got to say at this minute, Viv. I'm wondering who the guy is."

"He isn't a guy. He's a——"

But just then the breakfast bell rang, and habit was too strong even for Vivian. We bolted. If you're not there for prayers you don't get any breakfast.

"Who do you suppose it could be?" asked Theo, round-eyed and innocent, as we sat consuming oatmeal porridge and hash.

"Why, Theo, how can you ask? Vivian, of course," I gurgled, with my mouth full, casting one eye up toward the end of the table to see that Miss Sloan wasn't noticing my breach of manners. "It's just like her. Don't you remember her autograph album, with all those remarkable autographs in it, signed Antonio, Count of Castelnuovo, Alphonso of Castille, Graham, Duke of Claverhouse, and all that? Of course she wrote them all herself, but

I believe she's hypnotized herself into forgetting it."

You see, Vivian Pringle is a whole lot like her front name, and not a bit like the other. She has the blackest hair I ever saw, and big, dark eyes, and an olive skin, and thin, very red lips, and that kind of a little, pointed nose and chin that the novels call "piquant," if that's the way it's spelled. She's very stunning looking; there's no two ways about it.

Besides being stunning, Vivian is romantic. She's the most romantic thing in the school, which is saying a lot. She's simply full up to her hair bows with gooey novels and poems; and I wouldn't say she tells lies—but she has an imagination—oh, my!

I was so sure that Vivian had written the note herself that I forgot all about it until that night, just before retiring bell, when she came prancing into our room again. She rooms by herself; her people have oceans of money.

"Say, Betty, come in and sleep with me to-night, so we can keep each other awake and surprise him. Theo won't mind, will you, Theo?"

"Not a bit," answered Theodosia. "It'll give me a chance to get half the blankets and a decent night's sleep."

"Vivian Pringle, you know who wrote that note," I chimed in, brushing out my hair. "You wrote it yourself."

"Honor bright, Betty, I didn't. I swear by—"

"By Antonio, Count of Castelnuovo, Alphonso of Castille, and Graham, Duke of Claverhouse," I finished obligingly.

Vivian colored a little, but held firm.

"Honest, Betty, I didn't; I'm just as much in the dark as you are. Come on—do."

Well, I went. I thought there might be just a bare possibility that Vivian hadn't written it herself.

We managed to keep awake until we heard the clocks in the town strike one. But that was the last we heard until Tom came along past our door jangling that awful rising bell. There was no lavender note on the window sill.

"I knew it, Vivian Pringle, I knew it! Now 'fess us and clear your soul."

"I haven't got anything to 'fess up, Betty. I didn't write it. You see, he says," and she fished the note out of a locked drawer where she keeps all her treasured things, "he won't always be able to leave a note. 'Arduous labors,' I wonder what they can be? Maybe he's a foreigner here on confidential business. I've always thought I'd love to marry a foreigner. Or maybe he's a poet, and only gets his inspiration at night, or an artist, and watches for certain effects—"

But just here that breakfast bell rang, and we ran a dressing Marathon in order to get down in time for prayers.

The next night, at Vivian's urgent entreaty, I slept with her again, and, of course, as luck would have it, we fell asleep long before morning. I wakened very early, just as the sun was coming up. Of course, I didn't expect to see anything on the window sill, but I looked. There was a lavender note.

The night before Vivian had fallen asleep before I did. If she had put the note there, she must have wakened again and got up and done it while I was asleep. This was scarcely likely. Once asleep, always asleep. I really began to think of Vivian's mysterious lover as a possibility.

I crept out of bed and got the note. This is how it read:

LADY OF THE DARK EYES: I saw you out walking yesterday afternoon and looked at you long and longingly, though you did not send even a tiny glance in my direction. Perhaps some other time, when out in that long line of youth and beauty, you may look on me, and know me for  
ONE WHO WILL NEVER CEASE TO LOVE YOU.

I glanced out and saw that it had been raining in the night. Vivian's room is on the second floor. Outside of her window is the sloping roof of a porch. My eyes happened to fall upon this roof. I looked and saw quite plainly, outlined in mud that was fast drying in the sun, a man's footprints.

I awakened Vivian by poking her in the ribs with the small end of an umbrella handle. It's a most effective



*Tiptoed in single file, slowly, softly, stealthily, along that long, dark, silent hall.*

measure, and I recommend it to all who suffer from late-rising bedfellows. She came to herself with a yell.

"Betty Watson, I'll have your life-blood. Avaunt, miscreant!"

And she bounded out of bed, and made a dive at me with a nail file.

I parried and tossed her the lavender note as a sign of truce.

"Viv, you're exonerated. I apologize on my knees. You're not Sapphira's understudy; you're a simple, honest maid, beloved by a faithful swain who's an expert at shinning up poles and crawling along slippery porch roofs. *I'oilà!*"

I dragged her to the window and pointed out the footprints. She clutched my arm excitedly.

"Betty!" was all she could gasp out.

I began to get excited, too, as I looked at those footprints, and thought of the words in that first letter: "Arduous labors; performed under cover of

the night; great risk and peril." The whole thing was exciting, mysterious, romantic! Of course, I wouldn't let Vivian know for worlds that I've got the least bit of romance in me; but I have, though I don't slop over with it like Vivian does.

We dressed in a hurry and rushed downstairs to look at the ground underneath the window. As I had expected, there was a trail of footprints leading from the gravel path straight to the particular post that supported the porch roof under Vivian's window. Vivian's admirer had walked to the post, shinned up it, walked across the roof, and deposited the note on the window sill. It was all as plain as print. All we had to do now was to find out who he was.

But that wasn't such an easy job. Night after night I would go in and sleep with Vivian, to Theo's intense satisfaction, and we would try to keep

awake. And night after night, in spite of all our devices, we would fall asleep somewhere between one and two in the morning. When we woke, sometimes there was a lavender note on the window sill and sometimes there wasn't.

Vivian answered every single note. She found some lovely pale-pink paper with her monogram on it down in the town, and she used to spend hours over those notes. And, mind you, she wouldn't let anybody see them, either, not even me, her old pal that had lost years of sleep for her sake.

And, oh, gee, how romantic, and sentimental, and mysterious, and stuck up she did get about her epistolary love affair with Etienne. She called him Etienne because that was her favorite name. She took to hanging out of the window in the twilight and her best party frock, with her chin in one hand and a flower in the other, doing *Juliet* to an imaginary *Romeo*. She was always picking perfectly good flowers to pieces saying, "He loves me, he loves me not," and she would play "Träumerei" and "Erster Verlust" to make even the matter-of-fact Theodosia weep tears.

One night Vivian put her pink answer on the sill as usual, and we went to bed. In the night there was a big windstorm, and we didn't wake until it was nearly over. Vivian leaped out of bed like a tongue of flame, and darted toward the place where she had left the note. It was gone, and there was no lavender note in its place.

The next day Doctor Higgs—short for Doctor Higginbotham; she's our principal—sent for Vivian to come to her office. The result was that Vivian was locked in her room.

"What's it all about, Viv?" I inquired through the keyhole, after the authorities had taken their departure.

I heard Vivian stamp her foot in a fit of rage.

"Oh, it's that note," she cried fiercely. "Higgs found it—of course—just like one of fate's horrid tricks. And now she says I've got to stay cooped up in here till to-morrow—without anything to eat. It's a perfect outrage! Why,

it's exactly like Russia! Oh, I wish Etienne were here! I'm going to write to him about it. I'm going to ask him to take me away from here—right away. I'm going—"

"Vivian," I hollered through the key-hole. "*Calmes-vous. Soyez tranquille.* In other words, keep your hair on. You don't know a thing about Etienne's personal appearance, character, ancestry, or financial prospects. Don't write any rash letters to Etienne. In the meantime I'll try to do something to alleviate your tragic and pitiful condition. Pull out the big drawer underneath your wardrobe."

I went back into my room and pulled out the drawer under *my* wardrobe. Yes, they corresponded exactly, and all Vivian had to do was to crawl through the opening left by the drawers, which she immediately did. She was excited, to say the least.

"Betty, I've just *got* to find out Etienne. I must see him, I *must* know that I've got somebody to go to in case they keep on persecuting me like this. I'm going to see him to-night if I have to stand on my toes every minute to keep awake. If he only knew how I was treated here, I'm sure——"

"Vivian," I interrupted all at once, "I've got a great idea, a flash of genius, the inspiration of a lifetime!"

"What?"

"We'll go up and sleep on the roof of the tower."

"The roof of the tower!"

"Yes, it's great up there; and there'll be moonlight to-night, and we can lie and look up at the stars and feel the wind blowing on our faces and pretend we're explorers. I always did have a hankering hank to sleep out of doors. It'll be so different that we'll never sleep a wink. And you know we can see your window from there; so when we see him coming you can beat it down and ask him who he is."

"Oh, Betty, great! You're a wonder! That'll be the very thing! And how perfectly romantic; why, it'll be exactly like a novel!"

Theo came in just then, and we explained our plan to her. Theo is my

cousin, a dear kid, but awfully strong for law and order, and awfully strong-minded about it. At first she was as set against it as a little bulldog, but we talked her over. I knew she would come around because she was just as crazy to find out about Vivian's admirer as the rest of us.

When the dinner bell rang—we have dinner at night at St. Agatha's, just like the swell New York schools—Theodosia and I went down with instructions from Vivian to conceal about our persons everything in the way of eatables that we could lay hands on. She, meanwhile, was going to slip out into the orchard and garden, which would probably not be watched at mealtime, and try to get some cherries and strawberries.

When we got back, Vivian was already there. She had a hat full of strawberries, and two enormous rain-coat pockets bursting with cherries. Such a treat! The dream of my life, which is to get within reach of *all* the strawberries and cherries that I can eat, was almost realized that night. I didn't say so to Vivian, but I couldn't help being glad that Doctor Higgs had found that note.

"Sorry we couldn't bring you any soup, Vivian; but here's sugar for the strawberries, and five slices of bread and butter, and four cookies, and three chunks of roast beef, and two hard-boiled eggs, and a cold potato. I got mine by loitering gracefully around as the others were going out, pretending to look for a lost napkin ring, and Theodosia pinched hers at the table."

Vivian is one of those thin people, who, in spite of their ethereal looks and romantic temperaments, eat an awful lot. Theo divided the cherries and strawberries into three equal portions, counting them carefully for that purpose, and Vivian had all the other stuff—every bite.

After retiring bell, Miss Perkins, the teacher on our hall, always makes a round of all the girls' rooms, and opens each door to see that everybody is in bed. We put out the light, and crawled into bed with our clothes on for this

event, Theo and I in our room, and Vivian in hers, with the wardrobe drawers innocently put back where they belonged.

We waited after she had visited us until we finally heard her close the door of her own room, and then we got up and pulled out the wardrobe drawers again, and Vivian crawled through, dragging her blankets and pillows after her.

Theo and I took all that we could carry from our bed, and we opened the door as cautiously as prisoners escaping from the Bastille, closed it as though the lock were velvet, and tiptoed in single file, slowly, softly, stealthily, along that long, dark, silent hall, past dozens of pupils' doors, past Miss Perkins' door, past the housekeeper's door, past Doctor Higgs' door, until, at last, after what seemed like seven hours, we reached the stairway to the third floor. Up this we climbed, slowly, softly, stealthily, step by step, along the third-floor hall, and finally to the attic stairs, up the attic stairs, and through the attic to the dark, narrow, winding, cobwebby flight of stairs that led to the roof of the tower.

"Oh, Betty, isn't this glorious!" exclaimed Vivian, as we finally stepped up onto the roof. "Isn't it wonderful! Why don't we always sleep here?"

"Probably because the jocund sound of the rising bell doesn't reach to this altitudinous solitude," I answered, trying to pretend that I wasn't impressed.

But I was impressed.

It was a soft, warm, moonlight night. The dark air was full of the smell of roses and honeysuckle, which grew in the garden down below. Up above was the sky, not dark nor light, but a beautiful, soft, hazy blue, with just a few stars that the moon couldn't outshine. I leaned over the parapet and looked down into the shadowy, sweet-smelling shrubbery, and secretly wished that I, too, had somebody who cared enough to write letters to me and leave them on my window sill. Happy Vivian, who—

It was the soft, sibilant, monotonous sound of a mosquito. Instinctively I

became generally conscious of my ankles, then acutely so of the left one. I slapped suddenly and mightily, but he was gone, and only the bite remained.

I strolled over to where Theo and Vivian, some little distance apart, were leaning over the parapet.

"Any mosquitoes here?" I inquired casually.

"No," sang out Theo.

And Vivian cast at me a silent reproach that said as plainly as words that I had rudely broken in on a soulful mood. I felt lonely and misunderstood.

"Well, they bite me, you know," I explained apologetically. "I'm going to lie down in the blankets and protect myself."

I chose a spot in one corner, arranged my pillows, wrapped myself in my share of the blankets, looked up at the moon, and scratched another bite. Soon Theo joined me, and finally Vivian, tired at last of the *Juliet* attitude.

We lay there and talked and talked, about love at first sight—which Vivian believed in, and I didn't, and Theo was doubtful about—and the latest way of doing the hair, and noblemen in disguise, and a new way of tying shoe laces so they won't come untied, and whether we'd rather be married to a poet or an artist, all the time our remarks punctuated by my frequent slaps in pursuit of the mosquitoes. Finally Theo dropped off to sleep, and she seemed to enjoy it so much we hadn't the heart to wake her.

I did my best to converse with Vivian about the abstract subjects she pro-

posed, but she was getting frightfully sentimental and toplofty, and you can't be sentimental with a million mosquitoes attacking you from a million different points, and with somebody lying beside you so immune and comfortable that she can devote her whole attention to highbrow conversation.

"Vivian," I exclaimed at last, throwing aside the blankets and jumping to my feet, "I can't stand this a minute longer. If I stay here like this those bloodthirsty mosquitoes will pick my bones before morning. I've got some stuff for keeping them off down in my room. I'll just slip down and get it and come right up again."

"All right," assented Vivian, in that tone of slightly irritated toleration that people immune to mosquitoes display toward people who are not; "try not to be gone long. Funny they don't seem to bother me; perhaps I don't notice the bites."

"Vivian Pringle, I hope you choke. You think you're superior - minded, whereas the truth

is you're only inferior eating."

I left Vivian looking at the moon and dreaming about Etienne, and got back to my room without any trouble. There I lighted the gas and found the mosquito stuff, and was just going to start back for the tower when it suddenly occurred to me that I was hungry. Keeping awake on an airy rooftop is hungry work—try it if you don't believe me—and I hadn't had as much dinner as usual on account of having had to supply Vivian.

I reflected. It was almost one



*I made a mighty spring, threw my weight on the upper part of the barrel, and came down on the pantry floor.*



*Then he did a most unexpected thing.*

o'clock by my watch, just when everybody would be soundest asleep. I knew the way to the kitchen, and I knew that off the kitchen was the pantry. The pantry would probably be locked, but just as probably there would be some odds and ends of food about the kitchen which the cook had not thought it worth her while to put away. I would take some up to Theo and Vivian, and cement our friendship.

I took some matches and a candle, and started for the kitchen. It was easy to find my way about, for the moonlight made a sort of white twilight everywhere. I looked all around the kitchen, and couldn't find a single

thing to eat. My heart sank as I faced the prospect of staying awake all the rest of the night on a tower top and an empty stomach. I almost decided to go back to bed and let Vivian catch her inamorato the best way she knew how. But then I realized that such a course would hardly be honorable. It was I who had proposed the tower, and I was in duty bound to see the thing through. I *would* see it through, by George, if I died of starvation!

However, all hope was not lost. It was barely possible that the pantry door mightn't be locked. I tried it, and, to my amazement, it gave as easily as the hedge of thorns before the sleeping beauty's lover.

The first thing my hungry eyes lighted on was a plate of cold fried chicken left over from the guest table. There had been guests the night before. Oh, joy, there was jam, too—and cold potatoes—and bread—and—

As I reached for the jam I knocked down a tin cup. In the perfect stillness it made a noise like Gabriel's trump.

I listened. At first I heard nothing, and I was just congratulating myself on my luck, and making another reach for the jam, when my heart, all at once, stopped beating. I heard distinctly the opening of a door, and then footsteps making straight for the pantry.

I took one frantic look around, saw a barrel standing under a shelf, pulled it out, and crawled into it on top of some potatoes.

The cook, who is Irish, opened the door, talking to herself.

"Anither o' them doggasted mice, as

I'm a livin' crayther! Shure I hate them in me heart. I'll just set the bit thrapp on this lower shelf. An' who, I ask, has leit the barrel out that a-way? I'll be afther pushin' it back. For the love o' Mike, how heavy! I'd niver o' thocht there was that many pitatas left. To think I should o' forgot to lock the pantry door! My, but me mem'ry's failin' me!"

She went out, and I heard the key turn in the lock.

I waited until I heard her close her own door, and then I began to meditate on plans of escape.

The first thing to do was to get out of the barrel. But in order to do that I must get the barrel out from under the shelf. Say, if you want to try a good gymnastic feat, get into a barrel, have somebody push it under a shelf, and then try to get it out by your own unaided efforts. I wiggled, and twisted, and turned, and shoved, but all in vain; the barrel didn't budge a hair's breadth. I didn't dare to overturn it, for I was afraid it would make a noise like the crack of doom, and bring the whole faculty on the run. I tried gentle, shoving methods, tried them, and tried them, and tried them again; but nothing happened. Finally I began to choke for lack of air, and I got desperate. I stopped caring whether I got caught or not, and I made a mighty spring, threw my weight on the upper part of the barrel, and came down, accompanied by said barrel, on the pantry floor.

It didn't make such an awful noise, after all—just a sort of dull thud. I lay on the floor and waited for something to happen; but nobody stirred. Then I cautiously got to my feet, put the barrel back in its place, and began to look about for some means of escape.

First I tried the dumb-waiter. I crawled into it, and made an effort to operate the ropes; but it was no use. I couldn't get enough purchase on them to pull up my own hundred and twenty-five pounds. If only I had Theo and Vivian up above to help! But there was no use in thinking about that.

I got out of the waiter, and took a

look at the single window. It was about ten feet from the ground.

There was nothing for it but to stay all night and be ignominiously released by the cook or the kitchen maid in the morning, so I prepared to make the best of it. I ate a lot of fried chicken and cold potatoes, and bread and jam, drank about a quart of milk out of a big pitcher, lay down with a couple of flour sacks under my head, and another flour sack over me, and fell asleep.

It was beginning to be daylight when I awoke, stiff and cramped and chilled. I got up, stretched my legs and arms, and began walking up and down the pantry to warm myself.

Happening to glance up at the high window, I noticed something that had escaped me the night before. There was a range of shelves under it reaching from the floor to the ceiling.

I was a good climber; I had had lots of practice on trees, and poles, and mountains, and such things, and I was up those shelves in a jiffy. I lifted the window, and stuck my head out, and saw to my delight that the wall below was covered with a grape trellis. In another couple of seconds I had stepped over the sill, clambered down the trellis with no worse accident than a torn sleeve, and was standing on the ground, a free woman!

I chuckled with glee to think how I had cheated of their prey the kitchen maid, the cook, Miss Perkins, Doctor Higgs—

Suddenly I started. I heard a noise—footsteps—coming straight in my direction. Who in the world could it be at this unearthly hour? I darted behind a lilac bush and waited.

It was only the milk boy, a snub-nosed, freckle-faced, loose-jointed youth, carrying two enormous cans of milk. I watched him go to the kitchen door, put the cans on the steps, turn around, and come back toward me. All at once he stopped, hesitated, and looked all around. Was he, too, fond of strawberries and cherries? I began to get interested.

Then he did a most unexpected thing. He didn't go toward the orchard at all,

but turned and tiptoed softly and swiftly along the gravel path that runs past our wing. I followed behind the shrubbery.

He reached the post under Vivian's window.—I am telling this amazing thing just exactly as it happened.—He shinned up it, he tiptoed across the roof of the porch, pocketed a pink note that he found on the window sill, drew a lavender note from his pocket, and put it in the place of the pink one. Then he slid down the post, and disappeared in the direction of the road.

How did I feel? I didn't feel at all. I was numb, dazed, limp. I must have stood there for five minutes in the same spot, in the same attitude; with my eyes mechanically fixed on Vivian's window.

Then the thing hit me all of a sudden. I gave myself a mighty slap, and laughed loud and long. Oh, how I laughed! I didn't care a side comb whether anybody heard me or not. I fairly shrieked; I puffed; I gasped; I burbled. I held my sides for fear I would burst asunder, and the tears rolled in rivers down my cheeks. Finally I rolled around on the grass and kicked my feet in the air in a perfect ecstasy of laughter. Miss Perkins could have come, Doctor Higgs could have come, anybody could have come, and it wouldn't have made any difference to me.

At last I sobered down enough to

think about Theo and Vivian. Where were they? Had they seen the hero of the anonymous letters? The thought of him started me off into another fit, and it was five minutes more before I could walk.

That same hero had taught me how to get in. I shinned up the porch post and crawled through the window of my own room. There was no sign of Theo and Vivian; everything was just as we had left it the night before. I rushed up to the tower. There, sure enough, lay Theo and Vivian wrapped in their blankets, and sleeping like doormice.

"Far be it from me to hasten the evil hour," said I to myself, as I went back to my room. "Let her sleep and dream of him while she still has a chance."

In two seconds after I got into bed I was asleep, excitement and all. When I woke the college bell was ringing ten o'clock, and Miss Perkins was standing over me, telling me that I must dress at once and go down to Doctor Higginbotham's office.

How did Vivian take it when I at last had to tell her? Well, we still call ourselves friends, but there is a rift within the lute all right.

Whether the snub-nosed, freckle-faced, loose-jointed milk boy was really smitten with Vivian, or whether he was a cynical youth, and was just getting a rise out of her, is one of those things that will only be known when the secrets of all hearts are revealed.



### Impossible in Boston

ONE of the most prominent society leaders of New York has been deeply impressed with the different styles of religion among the churches of the North and South.

An old negro woman, of the shouting-Methodist variety, left her home in Georgia and went to Boston, where she found her way one Sunday into a Presbyterian church frequented ordinarily by whites only.

During the services the old "mammy" was so moved by her religious feelings that she began to shout "Amen!" in a loud tone of voice and to rock and sway from side to side.

"What are you doing?" asked a lady who sat in a pew behind her.

"Ise gettin' religion," replied the old mammy.

"Well," said the Boston lady severely, "you can't do that sort of thing in Boston."



# The Parasite

By Helen R. Martin

Author of "The Fighting Doctor," "Tillie: A Mennonite Maid," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JEAN PALEOLOGUE

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#### SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.\*

Among the guests assembled at a house party in a beautiful Southern home are Judge Arthur Randall, who is divorced, and his little son Bassis, to whom he is devoted. An unpopular young girl, Joan Laird, who seems to have no home and who visits from place to place, thinks everything of Bassis, and he adores her. Randall notices it and asks Joan to become Bassis' governess, which, to his great surprise, she absolutely refuses to do. There is a very beautiful girl staying in the house, Catherine Tyson, to whom Randall is greatly attracted. His sister, Mrs. McCord, the hostess, would like to make a match between them. Catherine, selfish, unprincipled, and passionately in love with Randall, lures him on into making love to her. But Randall, realizing how things are drifting, resolves for the sake of his little son to sacrifice himself and to ask Joan Laird to become the boy's stepmother, and his own legal wife. He makes no pretenses to caring for her, no false vows. To his relief, and astonishment as well, Joan accepts this offer of a formal marriage. Randall is deaf to the protests of his sister, Mrs. McCord, and immediately marries Joan in the village church. The whole household receives the news with amazement and consternation, and Catherine, in her silent rage and resentment, vows revenge.

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#### XIX.

SOME recent decisions handed down by the supreme court of the State had revealed Judge Randall to be so radically opposed to private monopoly of power as to make him, for the hour, the favorite theme of the newspapers all over the country. His face, familiar to every child from its frequent appearance in the papers, was, of course, recognized at once upon his arrival at any public place. Therefore, as he boarded a train one afternoon in October to return to his Eastport home after three weeks' absence, he chose a seat near the door, where he would not be apt to be observed and accosted; for

he preferred to spend the two and a half hours of the journey in reading and reflection, to giving the time to fellow travelers.

Lounging comfortably in his seat, with his newspaper held well before his face, he felt fairly safe from interruption, in spite of the fact that he was in a crowded day coach, there being no parlor cars on the train.

He was uncommonly glad to be getting home, after three weeks of hotel and restaurant life combined with hard professional work.

It was just five weeks ago to-day that his marriage to Joan had taken place—the first two of which he had spent in Eastport; the latter three in New York.

\*The first installment of "The Parasite" appeared in the November number of SMITH'S.



*He met his wife with only a formal handclasp.*

Those first two weeks at home had more than reassured him as to the success of his venture, and this afternoon, as occasionally his eyes strayed from his paper to the October landscape, he thought with complacency and with a new-born sense of well-being, how good it was to have a home to go to. He was sure no man ever appreciated the blessing of a comfortable and beautifully kept home until he had had a few years of knocking about in hotels or of living in a household so miserably and wastefully managed as almost to drive him to crime. By contrast with what he had been through in the past few years, his present situation, plus the unspeakable satisfaction of his boy's happiness,

seemed to him paradise. Joan was certainly conscientious in the discharge of her duties. Not only that, she had a knack of making the house seem homelike and cozy beyond anything he had ever known or imagined. And, best of all, she did it without taxing him with herself any more than a house cat would have done. That was the ideal phase of it—that he was as free and undisturbed as a bachelor. Another satisfactory aspect was that the house cat herself seemed fairly purring with contentment; as perfectly satisfied, apparently, to be let alone as he was. Sally's prediction that once she "had him" she would "exact her rights" showed no sign, as yet, of being fulfilled.

True, he had always disliked house cats, even as he had always found very domestic women inexpressibly tiresome; but as Joan, with a proper sensitiveness, avoided obtruding herself upon him, he was getting from their bargain nothing but solid comfort; and he was confident that this was

equally the case with her.

That things could continue like this—so satisfactorily comfortable all round—well, why shouldn't they? He would always see to it that Joan had everything that he could give her, and—

"Oh! You here! Dear me!"

He started as if shot, and, turning from the window, his paper dropping to his knee, he saw before him, in the aisle of the car, Catherine Tyson, tastefully and elegantly gowned as always, in a brown cloth suit with a brown velvet toque on her head—details of a woman's garb had always baffled him, though he did have an eye for effects—and the general effect of Catherine at this moment was certainly "stunning."

Instantly on his feet, drawing off his glove, he shook hands with her, his face lit up with pleasure at sight of her.

"My first opportunity to congratulate you!" she said, with her fascinating air of lazy boredom.

"Thank you. Where is your seat? May I come and sit with you?"

"I'll sit here with you for a while, if I may. My maid is up in front with my bag and umbrella. I didn't know, when I planned to take this train, that it had only day coaches. So uncomfortable—so crowded and stuffy, isn't it?"

"Your mother is not with you, then?" he asked, stepping out to give her the seat by the window, then seating himself beside her. "Where are you going, if I may know?"

"To Eastport. Mother follows on the night train."

"To Eastport? But you know Sally's not there, don't you—and that her house is closed? She's still at Beechlands, and she's off next week for Florence for the winter."

He looked at her rather quizzically as he said this. Did she know that Sally was going abroad to elude the necessity of being civil to Joan and presenting her to Eastport society?

"But to say good-by to Cousin Sally is what we're coming to Eastport for—mother and I," Catherine replied.

"But Sally's not coming to Eastport before she sails—she goes right from Beechlands to her ship."

"It's easy enough to motor out to Beechlands. Mother and I have promised Sally to spend part of the winter in Eastport to look after Ned and Cousin Hubert a bit."

"Ah! Indeed! I had not been told of that. You are going to stay at Sally's house this winter, then?"

"She wants us to—but I would not let mother consent to that—it would give me quite too much of Ned! We shall put up at the LaFayette to-night, and to-morrow engage a suite there for the winter."

"You'll look after Ned and Hubert from the LaFayette?"

"We shall run in every few days to

keep them from missing Sally too much, and to see that the servants are taking good care of them."

"Ah! I see."

It was with mingled emotions that Randall heard this news. Undoubtedly Catherine was a pleasant—even a delightful—stimulus to him; but she was also something of a torment; a disturber of his peace. To be sure, too much peace was rather stultifying! However, if she and Joan were brought together now, Catherine would certainly have to change her attitude.

"But you can't go to the LaFayette alone to-night—without your mother," he suddenly bethought him.

"I have my maid. Mother was to have joined me at Annapolis, but wired that she could not leave until to-night."

"Then you'll have to come home with me," he said, with spontaneous Southern hospitality and chivalry, "and let us take care of you until your mother comes."

"I don't know," she replied uncertainly, "about that, thank you. Your Joan might not be pleased to see me!"

"Of course you'll have to behave your nicest to her."

"Even then, I'm afraid my 'nicest' would not condone your offense in bringing me back with you from your journey!" she laughed. "Have you been away long?"

"Three weeks."

"That long! Then you had only a two weeks' honeymoon!"

"Long enough to prove to myself that I'm a lucky man!"

"How could you so soon run away from your bliss and stay so long?"

"Business. Not inclination."

"And you are really so daring"—she turned to him squarely—"as to take me home with you?"

"Why not?"

"Well"—she drew a long breath, as she relaxed and leaned back luxuriously in her seat—"to be sure, if Joan could stand that last week at Beechlands and not throw you over, she'd stand anything!"

Coolly, indifferently, as she spoke, the challenge of her words was like the

flick of a whip. But, with a sense of rather enjoying the game, he answered her with equal coolness: "Don't let that last week at Beechlards worry you—Joan and I understood each other perfectly. And, as for my bringing you home with me to-night, our understanding is still too clear for it to cause her uneasiness."

"And our last week at Beechlards—it doesn't 'worry' you?" she wondered impersonally.

"Why should it?"

"What a *delightfully* comfortable conscience some men have!"

"The woman tempted me and I did eat."

"Don't you think you're a bit of a *cad*, Arthur Randall?"

"To Joan?"

"Oh, Joan!" she shrugged. "She's not human, evidently!"

"More divine than human, I find her!" he admitted.

"Don't fancy you can deceive me into believing you are in love with her!"

"When does your mother reach Eastport?"

"Eleven-forty-five."

"Come home to dinner with me. Then, later, we'll take the motor and meet your mother's train, and I'll take you both to your hotel."

"If you insist, thank you. How is Bappis?"

"Been having German measles in my absence. Joan wrote she'd had a siege of it, keeping him entertained when he was convalescing!"

"A cheerful honeymoon for her!"

"I wired her to get a trained nurse. But she preferred to nurse him herself. It was the easiest way out for her—Bappis would have raised hell if any one had tried to come between him and his Tante Joan! I've got a bauble in my trunk to compensate her for what she's been through—she's fond of finery; I'll let Bappis present it to her."

Catherine looked at him curiously. How awfully absorbed he was in that troublesome little boy of his—and how well Joan played up to it!

"But," she said to herself, "she pays

too dear for what she gets! No man living would be worth the price of taking care of another woman's spoiled child for him!"

"So I suppose," she remarked aloud, "it was *Bappis* Joan promised to love, cherish, and obey in sickness and in health!"

Randall laughed. "Look!" He suddenly drew her attention to the view. "We're coming to the bay—we shall have the sunset on it! Ah, how I love this beautiful water!"

They dropped intimate personalities then, and talked of other matters. Catherine did not go back to her own seat until they neared Eastport.

The two and a half hours' ride seemed amazingly short to them both; and Catherine, the deep, passionate purpose of her mind strengthened tenfold by the wild ecstasy that shook her in this unexpected encounter with Randall, looked upon their meeting as "Providential," her carelessly illogical theology not bothering to draw fine distinctions between what is evangelically known as "divine Providence," and what is more commonly recognized to be diabolical rather than divine.

## XX.

Seated at his dinner table that evening, Randall, endeavoring to collect himself and get his bearings after the succession of sharp surprises that had greeted his home-coming, was too preoccupied to join much in the lively talk of his guests. For it turned out that Catherine was not their only dinner guest.

Upon his arrival with Miss Tyson an hour before, Joan greeting him in the hall, he had found himself rather annoyed to have Catherine witness the fact that, after a three weeks' absence, he met his wife with only a formal handclasp.

Bappis, having been allowed to stay up to see "Obber," had run before his stepmother and had frantically clung about his father's neck, his real joy at seeing him actually postponing for a few moments his demand for "a pres-

ent," though he knew that, in view of his illness during his father's absence, the present would certainly be an unusually fine one.

Whatever of astonishment Joan may have felt at sight of Randall's adjuncts—Miss Tyson and her maid—she held herself in hand with wonderful coolness, receiving them, upon Randall's hasty explanation of Miss Tyson's plight, with the formal politeness a courteous boarding-house mistress might use in greeting a new boarder.

Miss Tyson's manner, also formally polite, very thinly though subtly veiled the contempt she felt for Mrs. Randall's ridiculous position in this house. The bride's air of boarding-house mistress exactly met Catherine's idea of her place here; and her own cool, careless attitude toward her hostess just escaped being insolent.

Summoning a maid, Joan bade her take Miss Tyson to one of the guest rooms.

"You will excuse my going up with you, please? I have a visitor in the drawing-room."

"You will have to let us dine without changing, Joan," said Randall, "as Miss Tyson's luggage is at the Lafayette, and I'm too dead tired."

When, fifteen minutes later, having made himself a bit fresh, Randall joined Joan again in the drawing-room, to await with her Miss Tyson's coming down, he discovered that the "visitor" to whom she had referred was still with her—the young physician who had attended Bappis in his illness; making, evidently, a social, not a professional, visit, as he was in evening dress—and Bappis was now entirely recovered.

This was the first of the succession of surprises—a man of the world like Doctor Brooks finding Joan interesting enough to take him out of his way for a visit with her.

Upon Randall's appearing, Brooks rose at once to take his leave, but when the judge added his invitation to Joan's that he stop to dine with them, the doctor promptly accepted. He was very much at home in this house, his father, into whose practice he had succeeded,

having been the Randall family physician for forty years.

Catherine came in almost immediately, and Joan led the way to dinner. And it was at this point that Randall had become conscious of a rather startling transformation in her—his second surprise.

She wore a gray crêpe dinner gown in which he had seen her often at Beechlands, and which was just a trifle shabby; so it was not her garb that transformed her. He had been vaguely aware of something unaccustomed in her remarkably self-possessed reception of Catherine, and again in her bearing toward Doctor Brooks. But as she walked before him with Brooks to the dining room, he seemed scarcely to recognize the apologetic, shrinking little creature he had known, in this graceful girl with straight shoulders, head erect, and bright, eager, happy face upturned to her companion.

Catherine, too, he saw, was staring at her with astonished eyes.

And now, seated opposite her at the table, he found himself dumb before her unbelievable vivacity. Joan vivacious! What did it mean? Had her sudden transplanting from abject dependence to a position of comparative dignity and apparent independence caused her to bloom out like this? Or—he looked at young Brooks. The doctor was an attractive fellow, with his father's skill and cleverness, it was universally conceded, in his profession. A black-haired, black-eyed, interesting-looking man, with pale, clean-shaven face; a mouth both sensitive and sensuous, combined with a firm, strong chin; and beneath the intelligent brow the dark eyes flashed a fire that confirmed both the sensitiveness and the sensuousness of the mouth. A warm imagination, held under the control of a keen scientific sense, made this man a force, not only in his profession, but as a personality. The Southern deliberateness of his manner seemed in odd contrast to the vivid and abundant vitality that his face and physique suggested.

Joan and this man had been together



*"Where every woman wants her husband—there!" she affirmed.*

at Bappis' bedside, where Joan, Randall reflected, would, of course, show at her best, her sweetest, her womanliest. And she was rather a pretty girl. Was it, then, perhaps, a bit of masculine admiration that had thus brought her out?

Randall was seeing something tonight he had never seen before in his acquaintance with Catherine Tyson—a man meeting her for the first time and not losing himself in admiration of her. Brooks did not seem to realize that Catherine in a mere traveling suit far outshone Joan in full evening attire. In

fact, Joan seemed to absorb his attention quite to the exclusion of Catherine.

Randall wondered a little at the fact that evidently Joan had not, as yet, taken advantage of the ample means now at her command to buy herself some new frocks. The thing she had on was not very fit.

It was during the salad course that Catherine for the first time turned her conversation from Randall to her hostess.—It seemed, by the way, passing strange that Joan Laird should be Catherine Tyson's hostess!—"What on earth," she inquired, with a faintly ironic smile, "has so changed Bappis, Mrs. Randall, if I may ask? Never in all my quite extensive acquaintance with the young gentleman have I seen him go off to bed so meekly with his nurse! His step-

mother has him under better discipline than his 'tante' had, hasn't she? I must tell his Aunt Sally—she will be so glad!"

"Oh," replied Joan blithely, "I bribed him to go 'meekly' to bed without me!" "Indeed?"

"'Bribed him,' Joan?" Randall questioned. "Oh, I wouldn't do that, you know. That's rather bad!"

"The bribe was that he could stay up to see you—on condition that he would then go up to bed without me. When he goes to bed at his usual time, I stay with him until he falls asleep."

"I see. *That* was all right—that kind of bribing."

"His Aunt Sally always wished," said Catherine, "that some one could have the care of Bannis who would have his good at heart enough to wisely make him fall in line a bit—for the sake of his whole future, you know! He would be so much happier—don't you believe?—if he learned to conquer his own splendidly strong will! Of course, it's easier to wheedle and maneuver. I suppose it takes a mother's unselfish love to do, regardless of one's ease, what is really best for a child."

"Bannis isn't the sort to 'fall in line,'" smiled Joan. "Not he! He'll always have a line of his own! Too much like his father *not* to have! We ought to be glad there are *some* people like that—oughtn't we?—who won't fall in line. Else how would the world ever move?"

Was this actually Joan who was talking—having an opinion of her own, and frankly expressing it? Randall marveled.

"Bannis is very lucky," he unhesitatingly remarked, "to be in the care of one who is capable of recognizing his innate inability to fall in line."

Doctor Brooks at this point seemed to feel the situation to be a bit strained, and came to the rescue.

"By the way, Mrs. Randall," he spoke—and the drawl of his speech did not at all seem to fit the almost feverish brilliancy of his black eyes—"I've forgotten to mention a message my sister charged me to give you to-day—she wants you to let her propose your name for the Eastport Woman's Club. What shall I tell her?"

"She's very kind. What's the club for?"

"For the improvement of the condition of the female mind of Eastport, I believe—as nearly as I've ever been able to gather."

"Would you advise me to take the treatment—you think I need it?"

"I'm afraid I don't believe in it. Women's clubs savor too much of educational quackery, you know—a get-culture-quick process. It's the sort of women that are always getting up on

high planes and falling off again that go in so strong for this club business! You're not that sort. I don't think you'd make a good club woman, Mrs. Randall."

"Do the charity clubs, too, come in for your condemnation, Doctor Brooks?" Catherine inquired, with a lack-interest air. "I'm curious to know, as I'm usually pretty active in them. Shouldn't feel it right, indeed, *not* to be."

"They're worse—if you'll let me say just what I think?"

"I'm not in the least afraid to hear it. I shall—womanlike, you know—probably be of the same opinion still."

"Well, then, ladies' charity clubs—*ach Gott!* the smug, complacent self-righteousness and conscious superiority of their members! The grotesque inconsistency of their principles—'would move the gods to huge laughter!'

"And you, Judge Randall? You agree with Doctor Brooks?"

"Well, Catherine, a social state in which about one-third of the population is in such straits as to be forced to tolerate the patronage and charity of the other two-thirds, would seem rather rotten and doomed to perish."

"But the big charity organization here, of which Sally is president, and in which I am to act for her while she's abroad—I suppose, then, you won't be allowing Mrs. Randall to join it?"

"I don't impose my opinion upon Mrs. Randall."

"But until your millenium comes—so long as society is made up of rich and poor—the women of means and leisure who won't lend a helping hand—don't you feel?"—she turned with a smile to Joan—"a sense of responsibility not only toward the poor, but for the example you set to the whole community, of unselfishness and charity?"

"An example for the whole community—*me!*" repeated Joan ungrammatically. "I'm much more apt to be a warning! And I couldn't imagine my 'example' being so important as to give me a sense of responsibility toward other people? Dear me, no!"

"I'm afraid," laughed Catherine,

"you are very light-minded, Madame Randall!"

"I'm afraid I am, Miss Tyson. I'd so much *prefer* the rôle of a warning to that of an example!—I'd find it so much more entertaining, I'm sure, wouldn't you?" she appealed to the men. "I tried being an example once or twice—playing the Lady Bountiful by proxy—and instead of feeling as you do about it—that I was illuminating the community—I only felt horribly humiliated for the beneficiaries!—especially when they were grateful and abject."

"Yes? Of course, I can understand," said Catherine slowly, thoughtfully, "how your sympathies would go out to—the beneficiaries."

"It is a question," Randall quietly said, though feeling a rage against Catherine, not so much because of Joan's painful flush, as because of such impertinence toward the woman who bore his name and presided over his home, "whether 'light-mindedness' isn't less obnoxious than self-righteousness. Ready, Joan?" He looked inquiringly at her; and she at once laid down her napkin and rose to lead the way into the library for coffee.

The library of Judge Randall's house had always had an air of distinction, with its shelves of literature in every civilized tongue, its interesting pictures, its choice and beautiful relics of travel; and now, added to all this, the rare look of homeliness it had recently come to wear made it a room so satisfying as to invite every sort of intimate experience—friendship, confidence, dreams, deepest absorption in books, domestic nearness.

"By the way"—Joan spoke to Randall as they all sat cozily with their cups about the huge fireplace, in which two logs were blazing—"Doctor Brooks has a box for the opera to-night, which he generously offers us all. Who will go?"

"I'm afraid I'm too dead tired, Joan—unless," he hastily added, "you want to go?"

"Oh, yes, Doctor Brooks and I are going. I'm having the nurse girl sleep on the couch in Bassis' room. And you, Miss Tyson?"

"But I'm not dressed, thank you."

"Oh, I didn't think of that. You will excuse me, then, if I leave you here with Mr. Randall?"

"Certainly—don't think of inconveniencing yourself for me—I have to leave anyway at eleven o'clock, you know, to meet mother. I suppose I shall be able to make your husband behave for *that* short time—though he does deserve a *little* indulgence—don't you think?—when his wife runs away from him the first evening he is home after three weeks' absence?"

"I'm sure he won't mind when I leave him in such congenial company. Now, if you'll excuse me," she added, giving her empty cup to the butler, "I'll go upstairs and get on my wraps. It is time to start, isn't it?" she asked the doctor.

"By all means," he nodded, with a glance at his watch, as he rose to hold back the portières for her, his expressive face betraying helplessly his satisfaction in the situation.

She went away, but returned in a very few minutes, her wrap over her arm; and Randall rose to lay it about her shoulders.

"I may as well tell you, judge," said Brooks, his eyes on Joan as he stood before the fire, with his coat over his arm, his hat in his hand, "in case you want to change physicians, that I've fallen hopelessly in love with your wife."

"That's one thing, then, that you and I have in common!" Randall perfunctorily returned, without looking at Joan.

It was her smiling departure with Doctor Brooks that yielded him, Randall, the last of the succession of sharp surprises which that night greeted his home-coming.

When, some hours later, Catherine Tyson, alone in her room at the Lafayette, reviewed the situation as it appeared to her, it was with a considerable sense of bewilderment. Judge Randall and his wife did certainly have a very clear and comfortable understanding between them, when they could go their separate ways, independently of

each other, with such complacency as they had both displayed to-night. Of all queer marriages!

"Unless Joan is a consummate actress, I certainly didn't worry *her* any by returning home with her husband—taken up as she is with her fascinating doctor! The way that commonplace girl is landing all the big fish! Why, I don't believe Doctor Brooks could tell the color of my hair!"

As for Judge Randall, she reflected, he had certainly held himself in check to-night—both in his bearing toward herself and in the steady resistance he had offered to all her efforts to make him commit himself as to Joan.

"It sounds almost incongruous," she had laughed when they were left alone together in the library, "to be calling poor little Joan Laird 'Mrs. Randall'!"

"Yes," he had assented, smiling, "it does."

"I hope the sound yields you pride, and joy, and all the other proper emotions?"

"Naturally."

"Her rôle, now, Arthur—if you'll permit me?"

"Oh, don't mind me!"

"Is to get at you through the doctor."

"Get at me?"

"And have you where she wants you."

"And where is that? You really make me curious!"

"I'm certainly curious myself to see what that surprising person will be doing next! You ask *where* she wants you? Where every woman wants her husband—there!" she affirmed, pointing to her feet with her left hand, and wriggling her right thumb.

"She doesn't have to work for it—she's already got all I have to give. Now drop it, Catherine, and behave yourself. Come, let us have some music."

He had led her over to the music room, where they had played, and sung, and chatted until it was time to go to the depot.

But her sense of defeat to-night only aggravated her sense of injury and in-

creased her infatuation for the one and only man who had ever dared to trifle with her; who had never taken her seriously; who was able to resist her. And the contempt she had always felt for Joan was fast turning to venom. In short, Catherine Tyson was becoming a dangerous woman—all the more so because of the undoubtedly courage, the recklessness of her nature.

Hers was a character of splendid potentialities, perverted by ease and self-indulgence, and by the shallow and artificial standards of our modern social life.

## XXI.

When, at breakfast the next morning, Randall again met Joan, he found himself watching her warily to note further manifestations of the startling change in her that had revealed itself the night before.

But, alone with him, her manner was very much what it had always been—grave, quiet, demure. It was her countenance, however, that proved to him he had not merely dreamed of last night. There was still that soft, bright, happy look, as though her soul, long pent up, and her real self concealed, had suddenly been freed, to rejoice in life and in her youth. She looked as if she were having a hard time repressing herself to the self-effacement she evidently considered required of her in his presence.

It was just after Bannis had been excused from the table to be taken by his nurse to the kindergarten, that the mail was brought in by the butler; and Joan, receiving it from him, quickly separated two letters for herself from the pack and handed the rest to Randall.

He gave a slight start as he recognized the handwriting of the letter on the top of those she passed to him. Five times during his absence had Joan forwarded to him letters bearing that handwriting. It was a feminine hand, and the letters were thick. What, he wondered, had she thought about them? Not that it mattered, of course, what the child thought about anything concern-

ing him! Only—he felt a passing curiosity—

Glancing hastily over the rest of his mail, while he sipped his coffee, he finally opened and read this lengthy epistle from his feminine correspondent, while Joan, sitting opposite him, also sipped coffee and read, with evidently absorbing interest, her own two letters.

She had quite finished both of them, one consisting of several closely written sheets, before she looked up to meet his eyes regarding her thoughtfully, as he leaned back in his chair, his letter from his feminine correspondent held on his knee.

"Joan," he said, his voice deep-pitched, his face a bit pale, "you noticed among the mail you forwarded to me while I was away, the five letters addressed in a woman's hand, from Indianapolis?"

"Yes?"

"I suppose you wondered with what woman I was carrying on such a flourishing correspondence?"

"Oh, no," she protested, in a tone that said, "I shouldn't presume to wonder about your private affairs."

"They were from Bappis' mother. I have another one this morning."

"Oh!"

"When she learned that my marriage had actually taken place, she became—well, quite frantic!"

Joan gazed at him with wide-open eyes, but said nothing.

"She writes me almost daily of her determination to have Bappis. I tell you this for just one reason—to warn you to guard him!"

"I will. But—but—"

"Well? 'But'—?" he quickly, almost sharply, questioned.

"I will do my best," she said meekly.

"I depend on you to do just that, Joan. To be as faithful to your trust as you know how to be."

"I will certainly be as faithful as I know how," she earnestly answered.

"Thank you."

He rose, gathering up his mail. "Excuse me, please—I must be off to the office. Ah, by the way, I almost forgot to tell you"—he stopped by his

chair for an instant—"Judge Pennington, who sits on the bench with me, you know—or I suppose you know—and Colonel Ridgely will dine with me to-night."

"Very well."

"Look your smartest."

She half started at that, and he saw a faintly troubled look come into her eyes.

"Good morning." He reached across the table and shook hands with her ceremoniously—they left the room.

But all the way downtown to his office he pondered it—that faintly troubled, almost distressed, look with which she had met his admonition to be well dressed to-night. It occupied him almost to the exclusion of the sore subject that so heavily weighed upon his heart—the letter from Laura in his breast pocket.

That letter, by the way, occupied also Joan's mind, as during several hours of the morning she busied herself with the directing of her household affairs. So much, indeed, did it trouble her that when, late that afternoon, Doctor Brooks, on his way home from his professional rounds, dropped in for a call upon her, she wondered whether it would be very bad taste, or even seeming disloyalty to Judge Randall, to speak to the doctor of her perplexity.

For, in the past three weeks, at Bappis' bedside, she and this young physician had come to feel extraordinarily, almost perilously, near to each other.

As Randall had surmised, Doctor Brooks had seen Joan at her best, physically and spiritually, in her rôle of sick nurse. Never had she come so near to looking entirely lovely as during those night watches with the doctor, when, clad in her beautiful Japanese kimono, her brown hair loosely coiled at her neck, she had devotedly ministered to her little stepson. In her genuine anxiety, her bearing, for the first time in all her life, had been free from self-consciousness, had been perfectly spontaneous and natural.

There was also that other element of attraction about her—noted so instantly the night before by Randall and Catherine Tyson—her newly acquired man-

ner of self-respect, almost of self-sufficiency—the effect, apparently, of the dignity, the independence, of her present position.

And, finally, there was, to Doctor Brooks, the subtle lure of mystery; her almost unnatural affection for this child not her own; her rare and always businesslike reference to her newly wedded husband; her reticence about herself; a tone and atmosphere of elusiveness that baffled and absorbed him. She seemed to him, indeed, the embodiment of womanly sweetness and dignity; the realization of all his romantic dreams.

For some days past he had been secretly exulting in a growing conviction that, strange as it might be, she seemed to meet and respond to him as she probably did not to her husband, and this conviction had naturally been confirmed last night by her going off alone with him to the opera when Judge Randall had but just returned home after three weeks' absence. Her doing this had, in fact, both startled and thrilled him.

It had also seemed to him a sufficient justification of his playing with fire this afternoon in again calling on her.

She met him with such frank and radiant pleasure at his coming that he had a hard time restraining his impulse to shock her by seizing and kissing her.

It was nearly seven o'clock, and she was already dressed for the evening, in the same gray crêpe gown she had worn the night before. As she had just succeeded, she informed him, in reading Bassis to sleep, she was now quite free to "visit" with him until her husband should return with two dinner guests.

"What a beautiful ruby!" Brooks exclaimed, at sight of the gem that glowed below her throat, as they sat down before the library fire. "It actually



*Joan, holding her letter with the addressed side of the envelope against her skirt, went forward to meet them.*

seems," he added, his remarkably brilliant eyes fascinated by the jewel heaving on her breast, "to be alive, to be part of you!"

"A gift from Bassis," she smiled. "My reward for pulling him through his illness! It came in his father's trunk."

"Ah! There's chicken pox next door—send Bassis over there to call! You might get a diamond tiara next time!"

"You'd have to hold out a stronger bribe than jewelry to tempt me to crime, seeing I don't like decking myself out with ornaments."

"Is that why," he curiously inquired,

"you wear no wedding or engagement ring?"

"Well, no-no," she said, flushing. "We were married so—so hastily, you know—we were engaged only about a week!"

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes."

"Had you known each other long?"

"Not very. Less than a month."

"How did you manage in that short time to become so extraordinarily fond of Bannis—not to mention Bannis' father?"

"But I had known Bannis long before I knew his father."

"You couldn't be fonder of the boy if he were your own!"

"You see, it was a case of two lonely, heart-hungry creatures finding each other."

"You refer to yourself and the judge?"

"You know I mean Bannis!" she quickly answered. "I believe," she added thoughtfully, "that the strongest feeling I am capable of is my love for children. It amounts to a passion with me. And Bannis responded to my overtures so overwhelmingly!"

"But why," he demanded impetuously, "should you ever be 'lonely and hungry'? You who are so—so sweet!" he burst out. "Who could be near you and not care for you, cherish you?"

The color mounted to his forehead as he spoke, and the jewel on Joan's bosom heaved and fell, as with round, child-like eyes she gazed at him.

"No one has ever thought of me like that. You are the first! That's why," she said pensively, "I love so to have you by me. You always make me feel that you really do like me, and are actually *interested* in me—and it's a novel and a wonderful experience to me—and certainly most soothing! You are to me what a nice, warm spot 'near the kitchen stove is to a cat—a wet cat, too!"

"Well! Thanks!"

"You almost make me pur!"

"What do you mean, you a bride of only two months, by telling me I am

the first man to tell you you are—lovable?"

"Because you *are* the first," she quickly answered—and there was, for a moment, a palpitating silence between them.

"Doctor Brooks," Joan broke it, "I wonder if I dare to ask you about something that troubles me to-day—to get your view of it?"

"Why not, my dear Mrs. Randall?"

"It seems almost like disloyalty to Mr. Randall for me to mention it, but—somehow I can't put it from me. I feel such a pressing need of seeing it with another's eyes!"

"Nothing could make me happier than to serve you, if it's in my power to."

"It's about—Mr. Randall's wife."

"Mr. Randall's wife?"

"I mean, of course, the other one."

"Sounds Turkish, doesn't it? Well?"

"She is frantic," Joan said with constraint, "to have her child. She always has been. And now that he's been given to a stepmother, she can't stand it! I feel somehow so wicked to be standing between that mother and her divine right!"

Doctor Brooks' face became as grave as her own as he heard her. "But you didn't come into this blindly, did you?" he gently asked.

"I know nothing of her; nothing of the cause of the divorce."

"Don't you think you are a bit late, beginning to inquire into all that *now*?"

"It never seemed to matter until—until now—when I am almost daily warned to guard Bannis from being stolen by her!"

"It's devilish—devilish!" Brooks exclaimed in a low, indignant tone. "That poor woman!"

"Oh! It looks that way to you? I was in hopes you could comfort me—could tell me she was probably unworthy of her son and husband, and that I need feel 'no scruples.'"

"No, I can't! Because, you see, Mrs. Randall, I happen to know this story from the inside, having been my father's assistant at the time of the trouble, and he having been the family physician

here. So I know it as no one else except those intimately concerned knows it. Randall himself doesn't realize that I know. I am sorry—more than sorry,” he added gravely, “that I cannot comfort you!”

“You think she *ought* to have her child?”

“Never had a woman a stronger right!”

“But Mr. Randall's right?”

“I should offend and hurt you if I said what I think.”

“No, no—I *must* know what you think!”

“Then what I think is that Randall certainly forfeited his right!”

“Oh!” she breathed, “I wish I had not asked you! I'd rather *not* know!”

He did not answer, and there was an instant's silence between them.

“But go on, please,” she presently begged him. “It is cowardly of me to shrink from knowing. Tell me—you remember Mrs. Randall well? What kind of a woman is she?”

“A woman one could not forget. A handsome, queenly creature, but dignified almost to stiffness, and rather unapproachable. The sort of woman a man would put on a pedestal and worship—she appealed so tremendously to the imagination. Perhaps, *too* fine for human nature's daily food! Therein, I suspect, lay the trouble.”

He pulled himself up short and turned a quick, apprehensive look upon Joan.

“Forgive me! You don't *want* me to tell you all this, surely!”

“I do. Please, go on.”

“I am not hurting you?”

“That doesn't matter. I must know—for the sake of Bannis' mother. Are you aware that Mr. Randall repeatedly begged her to return to him and Bannis—and that she refused? It was that which seemed to—to justify me!”

“But she could not return to him!”

“Oh! But Mr. Randall is incapable of anything base!” cried Joan, “and nothing short of his being base and cruel, I should think, *could* keep her from her child!”

“I am the last person in the world who should talk of this to you, Mrs. Randall—I have always been too entirely in sympathy with Bannis' mother.”

“I can't believe that you do Mr. Randall justice!”

“Naturally you can't.”

“I shall ask him for the whole story! If I am to go on keeping Bannis from her, I must know!”

“You ought to know!”

“And yet,” she said despairingly, “as you say, what good will it do me *now*, to know?”

“Your knowing may lead you to persuade Judge Randall to give Bannis to his mother.”

She flushed painfully as she hastily answered: “That I could not do!”

“You mean you could not part with the boy?” he asked, regarding her curiously.

“It would be hard to part with him,” she answered evasively. “But—well, I know Mr. Randall *could* not be persuaded to give him up to his mother! Bannis is the very core of his heart! Oh! If you knew!”

“And if you knew, Mrs. Randall, all that—”

He stopped, thrust his hand into his breast pocket, and drew out a thick letter.

“Mrs. Randall,” he spoke with a repressed intensity, as he held the letter and looked down into her face, “two weeks ago I had a letter from Bannis' mother, imploring me to help her get her child. I answered that, since I had met you, I believed your very love for the boy would be her greatest ally; that if you knew her story, you would and could use your influence with Judge Randall to persuade him to make her at least *this* reparation; that as, of course, professional honor prohibited me from repeating the story to you, *she* was the only one from whom you could learn it. Her response is here——” He tapped the letter on his knee. “This is her story—written by her for you!”

“Oh!”

Joan's face had gone white, and her eyes were almost terrified. "I am afraid to read it!"

"I have had this letter more than a week. I have not had courage to give it to you. You see, since I first wrote to her, two weeks ago, I have grown to know you so well, and to care very much for your happiness. So—I have not given you this letter. But now that you yourself ask me for the story—here it is."

Joan's hand was cold as she silently took it. She recognized the handwriting as that of the letters she had daily forwarded to Judge Randall during his absence.

"If I am making you suffer!" said Brooks remorsefully. "And yet, surely, some time you would have to hear it all! Laura Randall is too desperate to stand by and let this thing go on!"

"But for four years she has let it go on!"

"Three years. The first year she was a nervous wreck, an invalid. For three years Judge Randall has withheld her pleading for her child!"

"And for three years she has withheld his pleading with her to return to him and her own son!"

"But——"

The sound of the opening and closing of the front door, then of heavy footsteps and of men's voices in the hall outside the library, interrupted them.

The doctor rose, picking up his coat and hat from a chair. Joan also rose, looking white and worried.

"Mrs. Randall!"—Brooks held out his hand, "never forget, I beg you, that I stand ready always to help you in any way I can!"

"Thank you, Doctor Brooks!"

The portières before the library door were pushed aside, and Randall's broad shoulders and handsome head, his face tingling from the autumn evening air, appeared. He was followed across the room by Judge Pennington and Colonel Ridgely.

Joan, holding her letter with the addressed side of the envelope against her skirt, went forward to meet them.

## XXII.

Randall, with a passing sense of annoyance at Joan's having been so heedless of his admonition to make herself "smart" as to appear again in that dingy gray crêpe, and with also a vague sense of the unfitness of Brooks being again with her, went upstairs, after Brooks' hasty departure, leaving her with his two friends while he changed for dinner, and stopped in the nursery to see Bannis.

He had not failed to notice Joan's distraught, excited aspect. Was the state of things between her and Brooks going to be serious?

Her efforts to conceal that letter in her hand had also not escaped him. She was having a history of her own, it seemed! This was certainly a contingency he had not thought it necessary to take into account—that Joan would be having a love affair! Well, it did not matter, of course—she was free to do as she pleased—so long as what she pleased did not interfere with Bannis' welfare or the comfort of their home.

By the time he returned to the library all signs of her trouble—or whatever it was that had made her look so worried—had, he observed, disappeared, and he found her entertaining the two men he had left on her hands, with the same amazing vivacity she had displayed the night before; and the men, gray-haired old Judge Pennington, and portly, middle-aged Colonel Ridgely, certainly appeared to be enjoying it. They had been discussing the threadbare theme of woman suffrage, Joan's young convictions on the subject seeming, to herself at least, entirely fresh and original.

The discussion was continued with spirit even after they were seated at dinner.

"You don't take into account," the conservative elderly judge argued over his soup, "that woman is a creature of sentiment rather than intelligence, and that therefore her sphere should be confined within those areas of life where only her natural gift can have play."

"Heaven help her!" smiled Joan.

"You'd wall her up with her sentiment! That's the narrow 'area' she's trying to get out of! Give her something worth thinking about, that her activities may go out—not as now, sentimentally and mischievously—but intelligently and strongly!"

It had all been said many times before, but never with a more earnest air of uttering newly discovered truth. Randall found himself much diverted in listening.

"All the same," persisted Judge Pennington, "it is only the old-time charming woman who is governed primarily by her emotions that does her duty these days in the matter of giving to the state a half dozen or more lusty citizens! I agree with Napoleon, who said that the woman he most admired was she that was mother to the greatest number of children!"

"The mother of many children in these days is certainly not governed by her intelligence—whatever she *is* governed by!" Joan astonishingly affirmed. "The intelligent woman now knows that to produce a family in excess of the means at her command for equipping them well for life, is to tend toward deterioration; that merely to turn them loose on society, untrained, unequipped, is a *drain* on the state, and that she therefore becomes not a producer, but a parasite! Why, the complexities of modern civilized life make it an immense undertaking to rear properly *one* child to meet the frightful strain and pressure! A large family in moderate circumstances is perfectly disastrous; for untrained children simply become 'waste products of human life,' as the economists say."

Randall stared at the speaker as if he had never seen her before.

"I entirely agree with you, Mrs. Randall!" Colonel Ridgely stated, with admiring eyes on the bright, flushed face of the lady at the head of the table. "And, indeed, large families are no longer the necessity to the state they once were, since universal war does not now constantly drain the population; and science and sanitation have practically banished pestilence and enormously reduced infant mortality; and since the invention of machinery makes one man do twenty men's work. Children used to be a *profitable* investment. The father who had twenty children to become warriors and laborers was rich in that possession. Now, twenty children would drive most men to the poor-house or to suicide! If families were now as large as they used to be, there'd be an overpopulating that would be more disastrous than a decreasing one."



*Joan, meantime, in kimono and slippers, was lying on her bed, reading with breathless interest.*

What the state needs *now* is not many men, but *fit* men—well born, well trained; men of special and costly training for the higher work of life."

"And," said Joan eagerly, yet with a touch of reserve that lent a dignity to her speech, "motherhood should really be a lofty privilege permitted only to the fit."

"And fatherhood as well," pronounced Ridgely with conviction.

"And so," Joan added more quietly, "woman's former labors being taken away, the heavy burdens of large families of children, the household work which had to be performed without all the modern aids of machinery—the spinning, and weaving, and heating, and lighting, and what-not—it comes about that she *must* find new fields of activity—or become a parasite, a degenerate!"

"Well, now, Joan," Randall spoke at last, regarding her still with that look of never having seen her before, "it seems to me *you* have your hands full, quite in the old-fashioned way—running a house, and taking care of a child and a man!"

"But in a few years Bappis won't need me. And I shall still be young and strong. And even now I'm hardly busy enough to keep me out of mischief, household work these days being such a small fraction of what it once was. And," she added slowly, "there are many women these days, you know, to whom marriage doesn't appeal—because, after all, what is it at best but what you say—settling down to take care of a man!"

"And you a bride, Mrs. Randall!" Judge Pennington protested, his sharp old eyes looking at her rather wonderingly.

"Behold on what prosaic days are we fallen!" said Randall, sipping his wine. "And before you were married, Joan?" He put the question casually. "With such opinions as you hold, it's a wonder you didn't go in for a 'career' of some sort."

"I wasn't equipped. And couldn't afford to become equipped. You see, I was 'a waste product'!"

"And you didn't mind being 'a waste

product'? Because you remember the opportunity was several times offered you—"

He paused tentatively; and though his tone had been carelessly inquisitive, his eyes searched her face as if they would probe her to the core.

"They were not the sort of opportunities I was looking for," she answered.

Randall deemed it wise to change the subject.

His friends lingered late that night, and talk flowed freely and animatedly, though he himself was rather silent, his attention too much taken up with listening—listening in silent and secret amazement—to Joan's bright remarks. Joan making bright remarks! *Why* had she been so different at Beechlands last summer?

Joan, on her part, considering Randall as he appeared beside other strong men, felt how he did tower above them! What a look of power he had!—the power accrued not only from erudition in the law, but from cultured instincts and far-reaching thought. And—in spite of that letter thrust into the bosom of her gown, against which her heart was beating to-night—she felt a faint, exultant pride even in her very small possession of this man whom the world called her husband.

When their guests had departed, with reiterated and enthusiastic congratulations on Randall's domestic felicity, Joan, not lingering alone with her husband for a moment, bade him good night at once and started upstairs.

But he stopped her hasty flight.

"Joan?"

She paused with her hand on the bannister. "Yes?"

"Will you come into the library for a few moments? I want to speak with you."

"Certainly."

He led the way back into the room, and they sat down.

### XXIII.

"You don't mind tobacco smoke, I believe?"

"Not at all," Joan answered, her

whole bearing, the moment she was alone with him, changed from glowing animation to the subdued self-effacement with which he was so much more familiar.

"Anyway, I'm sure," he said quizzically, as he lit his pipe, "that Judge Pennington thought this room needed fumigating—with all these 'immoral' books about!"—pointing to a popular recent work on the white-slave traffic that lay on the table at his elbow, a copy of Henry James' "What Mazié Knew," and one of Hichens' "Bella Donna." "You seem," he said with a lift of his eyebrows, "to have a taste for books that are called 'immoral'?"

"Oh," she said sweetly, her childlike eyes gazing at him innocently, "we all do; every—damn one of us!"

He stared—then bent back his head and laughed.

"And," she gently added, "I didn't bring these 'immoral' books into the room—I found them here. And I wouldn't call any one of them 'immoral,' anyway; would you? This book, for instance," with a flash of her eyes as she picked up the white-slave work, "fairly maddened me to rise up and *do* things to stop it! Why, I shouldn't wonder if I—made a speech!" she ended, as if threatening to go to the very limit.

"A speech? But to whom? When? Under what auspices?" he grinned.

"But every woman *ought* to know of these dreadful things, for when all the women know and realize, it will be stopped!"

"You are sanguine!" he shrugged. "Of course," he smiled slightly, as he leaned back in his chair, crossed his legs, and smoked, "I don't call these books 'immoral'—a most ridiculous English word!—more variously misused than any word in our tongue!—applied to any and everything that might much more properly be labeled illegality, bad taste, inexpediency, or uncleanness."

He paused. She did not reply; she sat with her hands folded in her lap, her eyes following the smoke from his pipe, as she dutifully waited to hear

why he had requested her to stop downstairs.

"I want to ask you a question, Joan." He held his pipe away from his mouth and looked at her. "I want to ask you what has so metamorphosed you? This is not Joan Laird I see before me!"

"No," she pensively admitted, "it isn't."

"I don't recognize the young lady I led to the altar."

"I hardly recognize myself, Judge Randall."

"Well? How do you explain it?"

"It's rather subtle. I don't know that I can explain it. But," she asked anxiously, "I hope that even if I am changed, I am not in any way disappointing you?"

"I am rather relieved to find that you are not quite so pious as you've always looked, Joan!"

"Oh, do I look 'pious'?" she inquired, perturbed.

"Demure, I should have said. And the 'subtle' cause of this Jekyll-Hyde transformation—if you please?"

"Well," she said meditatively, "for one thing, I no longer have to feel my way—I've reached my goal."

"You're now what is known as a 'settled lady,' are you? Was that the 'goal' to which you were feeling your way?"

"Financial independence was the goal; a rich marriage the only available means," she quietly repeated. "I never really expected to accomplish it."

Randall looked at her for a moment uncertainly. "Accomplish *what*?"

"A rich marriage."

"Had your affection for Bassis, then, anything to do with your consenting to marry me?"

"It had everything to do with your asking me to marry you, and it, at least—my affection for Bassis—is genuine."

"My faith in that fact is what I staked everything upon, in this venture, you know."

"Yes, I know. And I hope you feel, Judge Randall, that your faith is justified. For it is my consciousness of having succeeded in meeting your require-

ments, of having at last found a niche in the world which seems truly mine, where I am really needed—it is this, I think, that has 'metamorphosed' me; given me a sense of freedom that makes everything in me bloom out—things that I did not know *were* in me—"

She stopped short, looking down thoughtfully at the hands folded loosely in her lap.

"But you could have come to the same freedom through the positions offered you—by Sallie's husband and by me—which you refused?" he said questioningly.

He saw a faint color creep into her face at this, but she did not lift her eyes to reply to it; to explain her strange inconsistency.

"Why," he inquired, beginning to smoke again, "if I may ask you, Joan, did you so strongly desire 'a rich marriage'?"

"I knew the pangs of poverty."

"There are worse things than poverty; and better things than wealth. It is hard to believe that one who looks so—demure—can be so ambitiously worldly!"

She did not reply.

"But then," he went on, "if it was money you wanted, why, in the name of the gods, don't you use it now you've got it?"

"Use it?" she repeated with a deep flush of embarrassment which he found rather unaccountable.

"You dressed more smartly, Joan, last summer than you do now."

"My mother," she answered falteringly, "doesn't, of course, think it necessary, now, to send me things."

"Well, by the Lord!" he exclaimed, "I should rather hope she didn't! I'm asking you why in the world you don't buy yourself some clothes?"

"I buy the best I—I can afford."

"Afford! Are you a miser? A gambler? Or, if I don't give you enough—"

"Enough! Oh! You are more than generous to me! I—"

"Well? Then you've been gambling in stocks? Or giving nobly to the cause of suffrage? If you can't 'afford' better clothes than you're wearing, then, for goodness' sake, go downtown to-morrow and open an account at Stewart's."

"Oh, no, I could not do that! You give me too much now, I—"

"But you must dress better, you know. I can't have you looking shabby."

"I'm awfully sorry! But—I have spent nearly all my month's allowance. I—I thought my clothes would do."

"Well, they won't do."

He did not press her further to account for her allowance—that was, of course, her own private affair—but he laid down his pipe, went to his desk, and wrote a check.

"There," he said as, on his way back to his easy-chair, he stooped to lay it in her lap, "spend that; don't gamble, dominate, or hoard it."



*"I was assured by Miss Dorsey that my too frequent presence in the sick room was so bad for Mr. Randall as to endanger his life."*

"I will borrow it from you on my next month's allowance—since you want me to have new things at once."

"Nonsense!" he said rather impatiently, taking up his pipe and lounging back in his chair, "you don't have to keep yourself within an allowance. The allowance was your own suggestion. Understand that you are at all times to get yourself what you need and want."

"Thank you," she responded in a tone of uncertainty.

"If there are any thanks due," he asked, with a short laugh, "what becomes of that 'financial independence,' that 'sense of freedom' which you say has proved such a fertile soil for unsuspected brilliancy?"

"But," she responded with a forced air of courage, though looking greatly troubled, "that sense of freedom is very precious to me—the most precious thing I've ever known in my life except my love for Bappis and his for me! And if I am to keep it, Judge Randall," she went on, her tone becoming pleading, "I must not feel obliged to account for the allowance you give me for my services here—not be forced to spend that allowance in a way I prefer not to."

"Certainly you must not. But if the exigencies of your position require better clothing than your allowance permits—the case is simple—we'll increase the allowance."

"The allowance is ample to clothe me in purple and fine linen!—if I so choose to spend it. I have better uses for it."

"Part of your 'service' here, then," he said firmly, "must consist in appearing properly garbed. I insist upon that, Joan. So an increase of allowance you've got to accept."

"No—it would not be right! Because I use the money you give me for—I—send most of it to my mother, Judge Randall!"

The pained, proud sensitiveness of her face held him silent, almost spell-bound, for an instant.

"You will think," she added hastily, "that I impose upon you—to be letting you in for what was certainly not part of our agreement—the support of my

mother. But," she insisted with a gentle dignity, "I am supporting her!"

"By dressing my wife shabbily. I can't permit it."

Suddenly he realized that bright tears were glistening in her eyes, and he quickly spoke. "I've been very thoughtless, Joan, not to have arranged before now for your mother. We will settle an income upon her at once."

"No—no!" she exclaimed, in a low, tense voice, dabbing a handkerchief to her glistening eyes. "All my life I have been accepting charity—I'll never, never accept it again! Neither for myself nor for my mother. I will not!"

"Child, child," he spoke soothingly, "you know perfectly well that your services to me are priceless; that I can never make you anything like an adequate return for them. My providing for your mother is a matter of my signing a few checks—while you are giving your young life, your heart's blood, to Bappis! So, then"—he rose abruptly and spoke authoritatively—"your mother is going to be taken care of. And you will clothe yourself properly. Now," he concluded, holding out his hand to her, "go to bed."

She rose submissively, placed her hand in his, and looked up at him with solemn eyes. "I do thank you, Judge Randall, with all my heart for—for valuing my services so highly. I shall try very hard always to be worthy of your kindness! Good night."

She drew her hand from his and walked away. He stepped after her to hold back the portière from before the door. "Good night," he bowed—then went back to his chair before the fire.

He sat long that night over his pipe by the fire, a book in his hands, which he did not read, so interested he found himself in trying to piece together the tangled thread of Joan's inconsistencies.

"Every damn one of us!" he chuckled. "Astonishing child! I certainly did not know the maiden I was wedding out there at Beechlands!"

Had the "rich-marriage" ambition been a scheme between her mother and

herself, Joan agreeing to pay back the supplies for the fray as soon as she had "made good" by "accomplishing" her rich marriage? "I never thought I'd accomplish it," the child had told him with surprising candor.

"Well! She's certainly an odd mixture!" was his baffled conclusion as he rose to go to his room.

Joan, meantime, in kimono and slippers, was lying on her bed reading, with breathless interest and burning cheeks, the manuscript that related the story of Arthur Randall's divorce.

#### XXIV.

"To shield from disgrace the name of my son's father, the story of my divorce has never passed my lips, and the only living people who know it are Mr. and Mrs. McCord and Doctor Brooks. Not even to my lawyer was I willing to tell the shameful story, since I cared even more to protect my boy from having a disgrace like this follow him all his life than to have him again in my arms. You may be able to measure, from this fact, how great is my horror of giving publicity to this story, for though you are not a mother, you are at least a woman. And you will realize, too, how great the faith I am venturing to put in you, an utter stranger to me, when I here give into your keeping this story—trusting you to guard it as I have guarded it; and this I am doing in the agonized hope that you may be led, when you know the truth, to persuade your husband to give me back my son; or be moved yourself, by the tragedy of my marriage, to restore my baby to me.

"Our married life, up to the time my boy was two years old, was ideally happy. To me at least it was so, and I saw no signs of its being otherwise to my husband. I believed in him so absolutely; honored him above all men I had ever seen; and loved him so deeply! I confidently believed him to be as profoundly happy, as wholly satisfied in me as I was in him, unfaithfulness or disloyalty being so foreign to

my own nature that I could not conceive of them in one I held so sacredly near and dear.

"You will never know what it costs me to tell you my story—the destruction of my faith in the nobility of my husband—the dragging down of my highest ideals into the very mire—the cruel robbing me of my child!

"It was when my little Arthur was two years old that Mr. Randall was taken ill with what proved to be an extremely severe case of typhoid fever. Mrs. McCord took charge of the baby for me at her home, while I, with a trained nurse, gave myself up to the nursing of my husband. I soon broke down under the strain of sleepless nights and terrible anxiety; and a second nurse, a man, was employed to assist the woman.

"The woman nurse—a Miss Dorsey, of Annapolis—was a young and very pretty creature, a wonderful nurse, and utterly wrapped up in her work. I felt the deepest gratitude to her for her self-sacrificing devotion to her patient, for I was sure it was that only which was pulling him through.

"When the danger was over and he began to convalesce, the man was discharged and Miss Dorsey assumed the entire responsibility of the case. I was very anxious, now, to take my share in the nursing, but I was assured by Miss Dorsey that the two things essential to averting a relapse were a careful diet and absolute quiet, and that my too frequent or prolonged presence in the sick room was so bad for Mr. Randall as to endanger his life. So, at the sacrifice of my great longing to be constantly with him, I stayed away a great deal, to the mystification, I afterward learned, of my doctor, who knew nothing about this regulation of Miss Dorsey's—a regulation arranged by her and Mr. Randall for their mutual enjoyment.

"Not the slightest suspicion came to me of there being anything wrong in the situation—though when I was permitted to enter the sick room, Mr. Randall seemed to me to be steadily getting so much stronger that I found it hard

to understand why my presence should be so dangerous for him. But my faith in Miss Dorsey was absolute, and my gratitude to her unbounded—until, one day, I made a discovery.

"To be brief—for I find I cannot tell you this story in all its harrowing details—my husband became the lover of this young woman, there in my very own home. When I discovered it, and ordered her from the house, she refused to go—and when I appealed to my husband, he refused to let her go. They left me no alternative but to go myself from the house.

"Meantime, my sister-in-law, Mrs. McCord, had taken my baby to the seaside, and I found, to my utter consternation, that when I asked her to send him to me, at my father's home, she, under her brother's influence, absolutely refused to do so. He was taken to his father and given into Miss Dorsey's care.

"Ever since that, for four years, I have been trying to get my child! Though I was able to secure a divorce without any trouble, I could not, unless I could bring myself to face a public scandal, secure the custody of my child. And, as I have said, I have

not been willing to expose before the world, in the low vulgarity of this horrible story, the father of my son.

"What Miss Dorsey's subsequent relations were to Mr. Randall, I never knew, nor cared to know. What became of her, or whether she is even now alive, I don't know.

"Since the day that I left his house I have never laid eyes on the man that was my husband—the man who for four years, forgetting all that I once was to him, has imposed upon me the anguish of a cheated motherhood by keeping from me the son I bore him!

"You will see that not even to regain my child could I return to him. How could I? He has over and over again begged me to return to him—but only for little Arthur's sake; he himself admits the impossibility of expecting me to live with him as of old.

"If, with the truth before you, you are now moved to any sympathy for a woman you have never seen, but who, you will realize, has suffered long and deeply—if you will plead for me that my boy be given back to me—then, may God, when He gives you a son of your own, bless you.

"LAURA CLAIBORNE RANDALL."

TO BE CONTINUED.



### Another Country Maid

MRS. MATTHEW T. SCOTT, president general of the Daughters of the American Revolution, tells how one of the country Daughters behaved at an annual congress when Theodore Roosevelt was president.

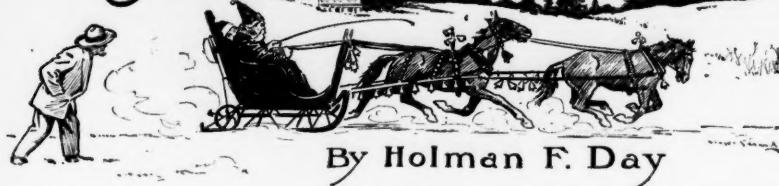
This Daughter had looked forward for a week to the reception that was to be given to the organization by Mr. Roosevelt. She talked about it, dreamed about it, and put on her best bib and tucker for it. It was her one opportunity to shake hands with him whom she considered the greatest man in the world.

The wonderful moment arrived. After waiting an hour in the long line of the stately Daughters, the little country delegate found herself in front of Roosevelt. She became excited. All the fine speeches and sweet words that she had planned flew out of her mind. Clasping her hands behind her and looking up into the president's face, she gasped:

"Oh, Teddy!"

Then, as the crowd laughed and the woman from the country was utterly abashed, Roosevelt leaned over, gave her hand an extra hard squeeze, and said: "That's my name!"

# "Plug" Koose of Christmas Cove



By Holman F. Day

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

FOR a noonday apparition, it was a startler.

"Cap'n" Aaron Sproul, footing it down across the winter landscape to Scotaze village, hustled out of the road in order to give it free passage.

Clamor, traveling faster than the apparition, preceded it; clamor roared its crescendo as it passed; and clamor lingered in the frosty air after it was gone.

It appeared, it passed, it fled around a curve where the alders masked the highway. It had whisked by with comet speed, but Cap'n Sproul's keen sailor eye had grasped the main details. He stepped out into the highway and stared at the cloud of snow at the turn of the road.

"If that was Santy Claus—and it looked like him," muttered the cap'n, continuing his interrupted way to the village—"he must have joined a fire department since I heard from him last."

He had seen a man in a high-backed sleigh which was drawn by a couple of rangy roans, hitched tandem. The man had a red face, and his dingy white whiskers were parted by the rush of the air. An immense fur cap, conical, and tipped with a barred coon's-tail, towered from his head.

But his bizarre appearance was in no way as remarkable as the din that accompanied him.

The outfit was a veritable madness of bells. The thills and the harness straps of the roan horses were covered

with bells of various sizes. There were tinklers; there were chiming round bells on strings; there were clangorous cow bells that nigh drowned out their more melodious brethren. There was even a bell at the tip of the man's twitching whip; and a huge gong, fastened on the high back of the sleigh, clanged isochronally, worked by a spurred wheel that was clamped to a runner of the vehicle.

"With bells on his fingers and bells on his toes,  
He shall make music wherever he goes."

The cap'n was inspired to make this quotation as he trudged on in the wake of the uproar that was dying in the distance.

Around the bend of the alders he came upon a farmer man who was considerably mixed up with a horse, a pung, and the wayside fence. The farmer man was sitting on the horse's head—the horse being prostrate in a snow bank—and he was swearing with much vigor, and cutting harness straps with his jackknife in order to allow the animal to get upon its feet again.

Cap'n Sproul was prompt with assistance. Between them they got the horse up and into the road.

"I get the general impression, from what you are saying," stated the cap'n, "that whoever went past here just now is everything in the way of morals, brains, character, and disposition that a Sunday-school superintendent hadn't ought to be. But now if you'll only

give me his name I'll help you swear about him. I can't swear about a man in smooth and soavable shape until I know his name."

The farmer man plainly hated to break off his flow of invective in order to descend to the dull business of giving information. The cap'n was obliged to ask again, and to ask rather tartly.

"That's 'Plug' Koose!" yelled the farmer man. He began once more to refer to the general character of Koose, but, as his observations consisted principally of oaths, separated only by gulps for breath, the cap'n gleaned knowledge slowly. Eventually, by winnowing diligently in the chaff of blasphemy, he found out that this furry and noisy individual was a man named Koose, who had won the sobriquet of "Plug" in early life because he had plugged the butts of several hundreds of pumpkin pine logs and had worked them off on a sawmill operator for sound timber. No, the profane farmer man didn't know what his real first name was. No one in his memory had ever called the "fly-blistered old pelt of a skoohootus" anything except "Plug," and that name was good enough for him.

Those bells? Why, he had been so mean in the years 'way back that he wouldn't buy bells for his sleigh, the same as other people, and so they arrested him in the streets of Scotaze for driving without bells and running folks down before they could dodge. So he had paid his fine and had told the selectmen that after that he would give them bells enough. And now whenever he came into the village it was as bad as if a cyclone had struck the place. He scared every horse on the way, and sent all the hitched horses into "convictions," and nobody could do anything about it, for the law said only that bells must be carried—nothing about how many bells.

And the farmer man tied up his harness with bits of string, and proceeded, cursing, on his way.

Before the cap'n reached the village he had further and indubitable proof that the farmer man's statement about

the cyclonic qualities of Koose was well considered. Two horses, with red eyes and snorting nostrils and the fragments of sleighs hanging about their rattling heels, passed him on their tempestuous way out of the center of events in Scotaze. Indignant owners sped past him in pursuit of the fugitives, "flamping" their feet in the highway snow.

In the village itself he found the uproarious Koose rushing his tandem hitch up and down the main street. Men whose horses were tethered at hitching posts were standing guard, clinging to the headstalls of frothing equines.

"You have ordered bells in this village, and, by dingdi nation, you're getting what you have ordered!" vociferated Koose, in reply to the various remarks that were flung at him. "Nothing was said about how many bells, but when bells are ordered from me you can reckon on getting your money's worth. Every man who orders things from Jophanus Koose will get his money's worth."

"Except when he orders punkin pine logs," yelled an infuriated horse owner.

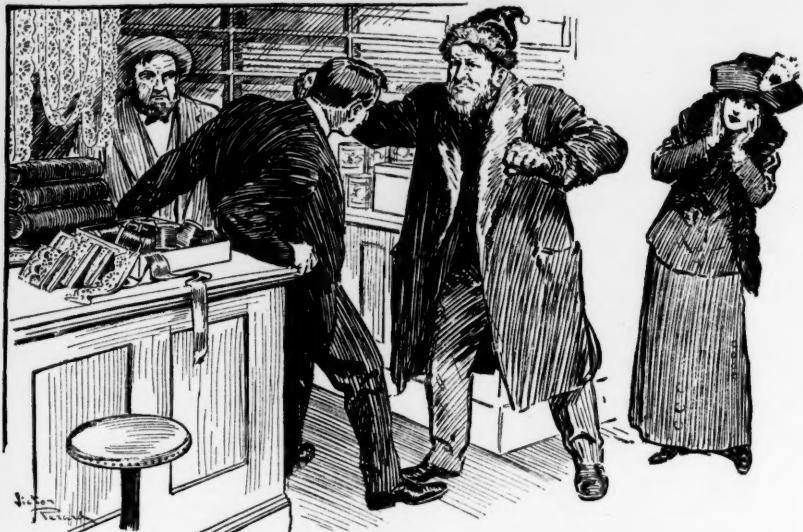
"I wouldn't take hard money off'n you," stated another citizen at the top of his voice. "It would be plugged."

Mr. Koose, having demonstrated to Scotaze that he had come to town with the full legal equipment of sleigh bells—and a little more for good measure—swung his horses to a hitching post, leaped out of his sleigh, and made fast. This hitching post was in front of young Parker Kinghorn's fancy-goods store. Cap'n Sproul, on a Christmas shopping errand for his wife, had his hand on the latch and his glowering gaze on Plug Koose, busy with his hitch rope.

Then the cap'n suddenly discovered something that he had not seen till that moment.

There was a young woman in the high-backed sleigh. She was a tiny figure of a woman, and she was tucked down in a corner of the seat, where she had been hidden by Koose's crowding bulk and his furs.

"Hold on!" bellowed Plug, wagging



*Before Kinghorn could retreat, the father buffeted him with furry hands as huge as a bear's paws.*

a mitten hand at the cap'n. "I know you. Your name is Sproul, and you ain't like the rest of the mildewed old corn tassels in this town. You're more like me—a man of the world, who knows beans from potato beetles."

The cap'n took his hand off the latch and narrowed his eyes.

"I've heard of you," insisted Koose, "and you're me in disposition all over again. Let birds of a feather peck their grain together, say I."

"I was never any kind of a hand to fish for high compliments," stated Cap'n Sproul.

"And I ain't any kind of a hand to give 'em, except when they are deserved," retorted Koose. "I may be flattering you, but, from what I've heard of your general character, I think you're worth being classed up with me. Being what you are, I'm going to take you into my confidence. I want you for a witness. I want you right now."

He straddled to his sleigh and seized the young woman by the arm.

"Oh, don't, father!" she wailed. "Don't make me go. I've promised all

you have asked. Please don't humiliate me."

"It will be tended to as I see fit—and it will be tended to before a competent witness," he roared. "There stands the competent witness—man by the name of Sproul—and he's my kind. You can walk in, or him and me will carry you in."

Cap'n Sproul took two steps forward when Koose twisted his cowering daughter's arm, but he paused and compressed his lips, with the air of a man who has decided to investigate further before offering interference in family affairs. The young woman came out of the sleigh, and Koose propelled her ahead of him toward the store door. The cap'n politely held the door open.

It was plain that young Mr. Kinghorn had been awaiting the entrance of the party and had been observing from the window of the store. His face was white when they came in.

"Keep your eyes and your ears open, Sproul," commanded Koose, with the air of an autocrat. "You'll hear some-

thing to the point—the kind of talk men like you and me make when they have any talk to make. Here she is, Tin-horn, or Kinghorn, or whatever your all-fired name is! Here is Georgianna Koose. I have brought her right along so that there wouldn't be any mistake about this matter. Look right at her. I give you permission. You'll never get another chance to look at her so close to. Examine goods carefully. You have been courting her, hey, when my back was turned? You have been sneaking around my premises Sunday nights, have you, you white-livered ribbon scissorer? The man my girl marries will be a man instead of a dude. Why, tap you and you'd run sap instead of blood—and extra-sweet sap, at that! You've been eeling your slimy way around my girl, have you? Well, you——"

"Hold on one moment, Mr. Koose! I admire and love and respect your daughter. I would have spoken to you before about this if you were a man who would listen to reason. I want to marry your——"

"Marry my daughter! Me stand by and see the red blood of the Koose family pindle out into the kind of nubbins your children would be? I've got a man picked for my daughter—and he *is* a man! I'm a good mind to take three inches of that pink ribbon behind your counter there and hang you with it. I'm a man of few words—and they're to the point. If you ever look at my daughter again, or ever speak to her, I'll swat you off'n the face of the earth like I'd swat a fly! And to show you what kind of swatting a man with red blood in him can do—you take that!"

Before Kinghorn could retreat, the father buffeted him with furry hands as huge as a bear's paws, first on one side of his head and then on the other. It was such a sudden and furious attack that the young man had no time to raise his own hands. To Cap'n Sproul's notion, that attack without notifying the antagonist savored of cowardice. Instantly Koose grabbed his daughter and rushed her to the door

and back into the sleigh. The cap'n restrained the furious young man, who started to rush after his assailant. Kinghorn struggled until the clamor of the myriad bells told that the tandem hitch had gone rioting out of the village.

"I don't blame you—I don't blame you one mite," expostulated the cap'n, pushing Kinghorn back into the store. "But you wouldn't gain anything by licking that man just now, not even if you was old Goliath and could crack him on your thumb nail. I think you *can* lick him. I think he is an old wind bag who goes around scaring folks with noise. The way he tackled you shows that he is a coward, anxious to get his clip in first and then run for it. I've studied cowards more or less. I've been feeling of your muscle while I've been holding you. I'll bet you can lick that man."

"I'll show him, I'll show you, I'll show everybody, whether I can lick him or not!" raved the young man. "I don't care if he is my Georgianna's father, I'll lick the pelt off him! She'll back me up in it. He has abused her, too. She wants to marry me. He has picked out a fellow up country for her—a fellow who has made his money swapping spavined horses and selling gar-getty cows—a fellow who is built like a Durham steer and knows just about as much as one. I've courted her fair and honorable, Cap'n Sproul, and if it was any other kind of a man but old Plug Koose I would have gone to him before this and asked for her. Now I'll go to him, all right! I'll go and knock off that old gob of ham that he wears for a head, and I'll stand on his neck till he uses his daughter the way a daughter ought to be used. I can lick him. Because I run a fancy-goods store ain't any sign I can't fight for the girl I love best of all the world." Mr. Kinghorn grabbed his hat, took down his store key from its peg, and displayed other symptoms of being ready to start out on the warpath.

"There's no particular reason why I should be messing into this thing," declared Cap'n Sproul, planting himself

at the head of the path aforesaid, his hands on his hips, and looking decidedly determined. He was blocking the path effectively. "But I seem to be in it. I was invited in by a man named Koose, who says that him and me are a good deal alike. I reckon I'll get better acquainted with him, and see whether we are or not. I want to test the matter out. For if I'm like him, and have ever given people reason to think I am, I'm going to appoint my own funeral and guaranteed to have the corpse ready. You take off that hat. You hang up that key. When it's time to lick that man I'll give you the signal, my son. Do you want that girl for your wife?"

"I reckon I'll make it a double funeral with you if I can't get her," stated the young man, with fervor. "I don't want old Koose's money. I'm making enough of my own. But I want his daughter, and I might as well die if I can't have her. We love each other."

"I never yet interfered with true love when I have seen it running smooth and free—or when I have seen it running rough, for that matter," said the cap'n. "There are times when a licking is wasted on a man. It doesn't take effect—it doesn't signify anything—it doesn't settle anything. As a sea captain, I have been obliged to make a study of the general effect of lickings. That old Koose needs one. There's no doubt about that. A good and scientific one would have stopped a good deal of wear and tear of hossflesh in this village and along the roads of this section in sleigh-bell time. But let somebody else tend to the sleigh-bell department of Koose. The licking you give him wants to have strict reference to the matter of getting his daughter for your wife and then living happy ever after in the Koose family. You agree to that, don't you?"

"Yes," admitted the young man.

"Then you'll have to let me decide, as an expert, when that licking is due. There's nothing that makes an expert so mad as to have his advice disregarded. He is liable to turn right around and be an enemy to you." The

cap'n regarded Kinghorn with severe disapprobation. The young man took off his hat and hung up the key.

"It can't be made any worse than it is, no matter what you do," he said, with grudging assent to the proposal of this new ally.

Cap'n Sproul sniffed scornfully, and went away, slamming the door after him.

It was a spiteful sort of slam, and Mr. Kinghorn gazed after the cap'n with an expression which hinted that he regretted his lack of enthusiasm in accepting an offer of assistance.

Had he been an eavesdropper at a conversation between Cap'n Sproul and Plug Koose several days later, he would have had additional reason to lament his want of tact.

That conversation took place in Cap'n Sproul's sitting room.

Mr. Koose's tandem hitch champed their bits and pawed snow in the cap'n's dooryard, while their master sipped a mug of hard cider which the cap'n had mulled by sticking the hot poker into it. Cap'n Sproul had been very bland, very insinuating in his little attentions, very hospitable ever since the Big Noise from Christmas Cove had arrived.

"No, sir, I couldn't rip past a house where a man lives who is so much like me," asserted Mr. Koose—asserted it many times while he "sooped" at his hot cider. "Take style, disposition, general way of doing things up brown—we're just alike. Call it riding roughshod if they like—they that criticize high-class folks that they don't understand. We don't care what they call it. We get what we go after. Don't you always get what you go after?"

"I've fallen into that habit more or less," confided the cap'n modestly, heating up another noggin of cider.

"It's a good habit to get into. I tell you, Sproul, you suited me as a witness. Perhaps you'd like to witness something else? My girl is going to marry the man I've picked out for her. She is going to marry him next week—the night before Christmas. Nothing like having a marriage on that date for

a family that lives at a place called Christmas Cove. What!"

"I should hate to see such a romantic plan spoiled," affirmed the cap'n. "And, seeing that me and you are so much alike in general tastes and disposition, I ain't going to stand by and see it spoiled."

Mr. Koose gulped his last mouthful of hot cider, and stared at the cap'n, for there was deep significance in the latter's tone.

"When I'm the father of the girl that's going to be married, and have got a man picked out for her having heft, red blood, and the cash to make a happy home, I'd like to know how anybody is going to step in and spoil anything," he snapped.

"If me and you wasn't so much alike in tastes and general disposition," stated the cap'n, "I wouldn't betray a confidence. I seem to be one of these kind of men that every one comes around to and confides in. You've just been doing so yourself. I never ask any one to confide in me. It bothers me to have 'em confide. You see, in this case, now that both sides have confided, I've got to give one side or t'other away. I've been chawing on the problem, I've got to give in to tastes and general disposition."

"Hadn't you just as soon talk a little less about yourself and about what you think, and more about my business, providing you've got any of mine to talk about?" was the offensive inquiry of Koose.

"Plan suits me to a T," owned the cap'n meekly. "That young Kinghorn has insisted on telling me all the plans for his elopement. He's going to run away with your daughter. She has been made desperate. She don't want to marry the fellow you have picked out for her. She is going to wait till the last minute and then take advan-



*Cap'n Sprout got up and shoved Mr. Koose down into a chair.*

tage of the general excitement of the wedding night, and scoot off with the ribbon scissorer."

Koosie shivered his mug on the hearth and stood up, yelping a terrific oath.

"You've acted as witness once—you've been asked as witness of a wedding. Now I want you to get into my sleigh and act as witness of a bone-breaking bee. I'm going down and kill a man!"

"You'd better wait a day or so," advised the cap'n. "I haven't worked all the details of his plans out of him yet."

"What do I want of the details of his plans? When I get through with him he'll be in fine pieces enough so that you can pick the details out with tweezers. You put on your hat and come along!"

Cap'n Sproul got up and shoved Mr. Koose down into a chair. He pinched his caller pretty hard in that process. He found that Mr. Koose was flabby under his bulging furs—was flabby and weak, and subsided when the cap'n pushed him with determination. The discovery interested and pleased Cap'n Sproul; it settled suspicions that he had been nursing; it made the rest of his plans more feasible.

"Koose, you need a manager and an adviser. This helltesplit style of yours has worked in the matter of sleigh bells and in some other ways, but now it's a case of love and romance, and you've got to tread on your tiptoes. Suppose you ramp down there now and knock that young fellow galley-west? You ain't got any open excuse for doing it; all he has done is to make plans. You'll get put into jail, and he'll have all the better chance to run off with your girl. You won't have a very merry Christmas, peeking through bars, and there won't be any wedding at your house, according to your schedule. Keep your setting in that chair till I get done with you!"

He poked a hard thumb into Mr. Koose's yielding ribs, and was gratified to note the softness he found.

"Now, you listen to your manager, Koose. You listen to me, and you can make a regular merry Christmas job out of this thing. A loving father is justified in doing most anything to a fellow when he finds that fellow running away with an innocent daughter. You see, don't you? Public opinion will be with you if you drop on him when he is right in the act. But if you go down and smash him up now, before he has done anything open and rash, public opinion will probably take you and ride you up to the jail on a rail. Public opinion ain't desperately in love with you in this village, Koose. As your manager, I'm giving you straight facts. Shut your mouth, and hear me! You've got your daughter hitched up with a bo'lin' knot, so to speak in sailor talk. Go home and give her plenty of scope. Fix it so that she can slip cable easy. Speaking in language you can

understand, I order you to go to work and help her elope with this white-livered chap. Be cat, and let her be mouse. Let her run. Then jump and land. You'll have him dead to rights, and you can mollywhop him to your heart's delight, and be backed up by public opinion, and can settle the thing forever, and she'll have to marry the man you've picked out, and then will live happy ever after. I tell you to go home and help her elope."

Mr. Koose's little, hard gray eyes were goggling at the cap'n. Suspicion mingled there with the red lust of desire for revenge.

The cap'n warmed to his subject. And in warming he forgot himself in a manner that nearly invited disaster:

"I'll put my brains to work and arrange the details of this elopement, Koose, and I'll see Kinghorn and—"

"You'll arrange details! What in the devil kind of a snap game are you trying to work on me?"

But the cap'n met Koose's glare with unruffled countenance.

"Arranging details means that I'm going to pump 'em out of Kinghorn and arrange 'em so that you'll have all points of the compass and a chart of the course of this elopement. Then you'll know just when to put a shot across the bows, hook on grapnels, and board the prize. Now, Koose, you go home. You'll be catching me up on some other little slip of my tongue, and you and me will be getting into trouble. Your part in this affair is to help your girl elope. I'll be on hand with full details."

With fingers that closed on Koose's flabby arm like the jaws of a bear trap, the cap'n propelled his caller toward the door. There was something in that masterful mien that quelled Koose. Even his bells jangled more quietly as the tandem hitch started away toward Christmas Cove.

A half hour later Cap'n Sproul had backed the astonished Kinghorn into the latter's little office.

"See here, my son, we'll make this story short and to the point. I've just arranged to have you elope with that

Koose girl. Her father is going to help her elope. I couldn't give him full details, for I planned the elopement on the spur of the moment."

"But I don't understand," gasped the lover.

"He don't, either, but that doesn't make any difference, son. I'm in this thing simply because a good girl and a nice young fellow who is making his way in the world are being kept apart by an old rhinoceros who doesn't know true love when he sees it. I've seen the girl, and I know you, and I've got a good line on the kind of an old cuss that Plug Koose is. Leave that kind to operate as free as they like, and they'll tramp through this world and go out of their way to hook happiness, like a bull hooking a red rag. Happiness makes them snort."

"I want her—I love her—but—"

"You're going to get her. I wouldn't let old Plug Koose pick out kittens from a litter for me; and he ain't got any better judgment when it comes to a husband for a daughter. He has been insulting me, Kinghorn, by bragging around that his tastes and general disposition are like mine. It isn't any good to step up to a fellow like that and deny it by word of mouth. The way to do is to show him. I'm going to show him!"

Cap'n Sproul jutted his chin, and his beard bristled.

The lover stared at the volunteer matchmaker with mingled hope and trepidation.

"Does she know—has she heard—"

"Not yet," returned the cap'n briskly. "I decided on it on the spur of the moment, only about half an hour ago. It's news all round. The idea surprised me first, and then I surprised old Koose with it, and now I have come down to surprise you. I'll surprise the girl next. Then I'll have full

details ready for all of you in good season, so that the thing can be pulled off the night before Christmas."

"But what have I got to do? I want to do something—something important in this thing," protested Kinghorn.

"The important thing you'll do is to marry the girl—that's important enough, ain't it? There's a still more important thing for you to do; and I've found out for sure that you can do it. Let me feel of your muscle once more. Yes, you can do it! But just to make certain, you'd better practice dumb-bells every day. That's all to date. Leave details to me."

"But I ought to be taken into the inside of this thing, Cap'n Sproul."

"An elopement is a touchy thing to handle, my son," replied the cap'n firmly. "The more people you let into the details the worse it becomes. And, see-



"I'm backing up the man that's going to be my father-in-law.  
What he says goes."

ing that this is your elopement, you ought to be anxious to see it handled with gloves. You needn't worry a mite—it will be done that way."

He wagged a cheerful salute with his hand, and trudged out of the store.

There were six days that must elapse between that date and the fateful Christmas Eve. Mr. Kinghorn, commanded by the cap'n, went boldly to the town clerk, and published his intentions of marriage with Georgiana Koose.

Then Cap'n Sproul hastened up to Christmas Cove and informed Mr. Koose of that fact.

"Running his head right into the noose—that's what he's doing," affirmed the cap'n, in a tone that made Mr. Koose's eyes glisten with anticipation. "I'm coaxing him along."

"But hasn't he been coaxed far enough, Sproul? Getting a license to marry my daughter makes excuse enough for me to go down and lick him. What's the good of letting it go any further? Come along and be my witness."

"Be a cat, I tell you, Koose. If you drop on him right at the last minute, just when he thinks he has got her, it'll double the general effect of the licking. You'll be licking him body and soul, then. Be a cat, and let the mouse play."

"Dammit! I've seen a mouse get away!"

"Not from a cat like you, Koose. Don't admit things about yourself that you wouldn't stand from another man. Do you know when you're going to land on him?"

"As you seem to be running this whole thing, I reckon you'll have to tell me," retorted Koose ungraciously.

"Just as old Notary Public Blake Parsons gets to where he asks the fellow if he is going to take this woman for his lawfully wedded wife—that is the time you reach out and gaffle him. If you're going to do a thing, do it good, and do it at the right time; that's what I say. And after you lick him there and then you can make him stay and see the notary marry the girl to

your man. All that's necessary is to have the license ready."

"Why haven't you been letting me into these details before? I like to look ahead to anything where there's real fun in it."

"An elopement is a touchy thing to handle. That's what I've had to tell all the parties concerned," stated the cap'n.

Koose blinked at him with renewed suspicion.

"So you are running both ends and the middle of this thing, are you? Sometimes I look at you and I feel perfectly at ease, because you and me have just the same tastes and general disposition; and then I look at you again, and I feel something in me that makes me want to rise up and welt you over the head like I'd welt anybody who was trying to do me."

"You'd better keep that last hankering under good control," advised Cap'n Sproul mildly. "You might hit harder'n you intended to, and hurt me. Now, let's go on about our straight business. To-morrow night you'll let your girl slide out to meet the proposed victim and have a little heart-to-heart talk with him, so that he can give her details of the elopement; and the visit to her will get him all molasses'd up and unsuspecting."

"What's to hinder 'em running away right then?"

"I've looked after all that, Koose. Intentions ain't been published long enough so that the license can be issued. I tell you, I'm looking after all the details. You needn't worry a mite—just obey orders."

Mr. Koose displayed neither enthusiasm nor content. He exhibited much uneasiness when the cap'n announced that he wished to interview Miss Koose in private.

"I tell you, Sproul, this is one place where a father fits into the scheme. If I can't be on hand and listen to what you have to say to my girl, then there's something underhanded in the whole thing."

"All elopements are underhanded, provided they're the right kind of elope-

ments," the cap'n assured him. "Don't you go to mussing matters up by thinking that you know more about 'em than I do. I'm going to roam around these premises and meet your girl accidental. After I have talked with her I'll have handed out the last installment of details. It'll be a self-acting proposition from them on. You want to be careful that you don't stick your fingers into the cogs. For I'm the steam behind this thing, and I'm high pressure, and them cogs will be traveling some."

Cap'n Sproul had nothing more to say to Mr. Koose after his interview with the girl. He beamed on the father as he climbed into his sleigh. Behind the smile was an air of mysterious satisfaction that made Koose growl curses under his breath.

"How I ever let that old salt hake stick his nose so fur into my private business as he has I can't figger out," he confided to himself. "Maybe it's because he's been a sea captain and has to be high cockalorum in everything he lays hand to. I don't like things so complicated, nor I don't like 'em so secret." But on further reflection Mr. Koose couldn't seem to do anything about it just then.

On the evening before Christmas, Cap'n Aaron Sproul rode up the frost-crисped road toward Christmas Cove. The stars were bright above him, his sleigh bells jingled merrily, and he had a smile above his beard that would have done credit to the joviality of Santa Claus himself.

Plug Koose, meeting him at the door of the Koose mansion with a lamp in his hand, glowered into that smile.

"Instink has been operating in me," stated Mr. Koose. "Instink is telling me over and over again that setting in this house to-night and fairly helping my daughter to skip out and meet that p'ison ribbon scissorer ain't showing as much sense as a goose shows about algebry. Now, don't go to giving me any more of that blasted taffy about cat and mouse!"

Cap'n Sproul pushed Koose in, and shut the door.

"Play lion, then, if it suits you bet-

ter," he advised blandly. "Be a lion in ambush. When the ewe lamb gets into the clutches of the hyena you can leap out and growl."

"If I thought you was making fun of me, talking about cat and lion and et ceterys, I'd leap out almighty sudden," declared Koose.

"At me?" inquired the cap'n, patting himself on the breast.

"Yessir, at you!"

"Better hold yourself in when you feel like that, Koose. I'm something of a lion myself. You'd better save your voice and muscle for the hyena. Now, we've got other business beside sassing each other. You go get up a pitcher of cider, and leave all doors unlocked, and you and me will set down and have a pleasant chat, just as though you didn't have a thing on your mind. If we hear that outside door shut we won't pay any attention."

Mr. Koose drove down his heavy hand upon the sitting-room table.

"I tell you that instink has been operating in me, and, seeing that this is my own business, and my own daughter, I'm going to put my finger into the thing, cogs or no cogs—and I don't care how much steam you've got in your b'iler."

The cap'n blinked his astonishment at this sudden turning of the worm. The next instant he understood why Mr. Koose dared thus to defy him. As if answering a cue contained in the speech of defiance, a burly man lurched from the door of an inner room.

"Me, too," announced the man. "Them's my sentiments. I'm backing up the man that's going to be my father-in-law. What he says goes."

Cap'n Sproul bent subdued gaze on the two fists that the new arrival poised on the table. He was meek in his reply. If the two men had known Cap'n Sproul better, they would have distrusted that meekness, and would also have distrusted the queer glint that came into his eyes.

"It ain't for me to stand out against the father that owns her and the man who loves her, gents. If my idee don't



*Koose yanked off his pointed fur cap and threw it on the floor and stamped upon it.*

suit, let's have the main hatch off'n your own idee, Koose."

"You say they're going to elope to Notary Blake Parsons', and get married there?"

"That's the schedule."

"Well, me and Rafe here ain't going to take any chances on chasing 'em. We did think of hiding in my door-yard and assassinating him on the premises."

"And then you couldn't prove in court that he was really after your daughter," suggested the cap'n.

"So we have decided to give him more rope, to make the thing binding. We're going to start right now from this house for old Parsons'. We'll be on hand when they get there. You are going with us. We want you for a witness, Sproul. And if you've dinkydoodled us in this matter you'll be something else."

Yes, if those two men had known Cap'n Sproul better they would have noticed that he was trying to express disappointment with his features, and was signally failing.

"My team is hitched up. There's

room in the sleigh for three," stated Koose. "We'll be starting."

"Head a pig one way, and he'll scoot between your legs and gallop off in the other direction," muttered the cap'n on his way to the door. "I keep surprising myself the way I can read human nature and plan accordingly. I know that Plug Koose would do just what he's doing. He ain't got the patience a man needs if he's going to deal right with the fine touches in life like elopements. I haven't approved of his lugging all those bells around," he continued in his ponderings, "but right now I'm thanking the particular devil that prompted him to tie 'em onto his turnout. All parties concerned can take notice that he's on his way, and they can take steps according."

It was a tumultuous ride—that journey to the notary's.

"What did you tell the girl about your starting off like this on her weddin' night?" the cap'n ventured to ask on the way.

"Like you've been telling me right along, it's none of your business now that I'm doing the planning. But it

was a good lie," said Koose, smacking satisfied lips.

Notary Parsons rushed to the door at sound of the din of bells in his doorway.

"We've come to the wedding," explained Koose grimly, as he stamped the snow off his boots, leading his companions into the house.

"What wedding?" stammered the notary.

"None of your bluffs now, Parsons! We know all about it—and you ought to be hamstrung for agreeing to marry runaways the way you keep doing. You'll do anything for five dollars. Well, here's five dollars for keeping us out of sight till they are standing up in front of you. Ask no questions, or I'll cuff your old chops. If you tip 'em off before I get at 'em, I'll strip your old hide off and sell it to bind law books with—calfskin is always in demand."

The moments dragged in the dark room where the three waited. Every little while Koose lighted a match and looked at his watch.

"Instink is working in me again," he growled at last. "This thing don't seem to be working out right. It's been an hour, and they ain't here."

"If you're getting your mouth made up to do any blaming, go ahead and blame yourself," said the cap'n.

"Ain't this what you told me was going to happen—this wedding here?"

"It was going to happen if my plans had been let alone. But you grabbed in on my plans. Now I ain't going to guarantee anything. No man can guarantee anything if another man steps in and grabs onto plans that had been all thought out and arranged."

Koose lighted a match, and studied the cap'n's face.

"By the high, old, pawed-over sassafras, you don't dare to set there, do you, and hint that they ain't coming?" he demanded.

"I ain't saying anything about it. It ain't any further business of mine. My plans have been grabbed in on. It's all your own plans now," stated the cap'n serenely.

"Plans be d——d!" yelled the burly man, starting for the door. "The two of you are acting like kids playing jack-straws, holding your breath for fear the pile will drop down. I'm going to stick my hand into this thing. That girl is being stole away from me." He rushed into the night outside, cursing horribly.

"Instink is telling me that you're going to be something beside a witness before this thing is over," gritted Koose, crowding into the sleigh beside the cap'n.

"Maybe I am," replied the cap'n, still mild. "But it'll be something that won't help you much."

The return trip was what the cap'n mentally termed a "howeferina."

"I hope Santa Claus ain't on this road to-night. If he is, and we ever hit him, he's a goner," he meditated.

"My Gawd! What is going on at my house?" yelped Koose, as they topped a hill. The mansion was lighted from top to bottom, and the radiance was reflected from the flashing snow outside. The yard was well filled with teams. There was the sound of fiddles within, squealing joyfully.

"It ain't for *my* wedding," gasped the burly man. "We was going to make it private, because the girl was bucking under the saddle."

"Well, whatever it is, it sounds mighty weddying," ventured the cap'n.

He was on the heels of the other two men when they rushed into the parlor. The room was crowded with folks in their best garb. At the upper end of the room were two who were unmistakably bride and groom, and they were shaking hands with their guests.

Koose's girl the bride; young Kinghorn the groom!

A hush fell upon the assemblage when the three men appeared.

Koose yanked off his pointed fur cap and threw it on the floor and stamped upon it.

"What is this?" he squalled.

The one who replied was the clergyman:

"It is a very happy wedding, Mr. Koose. Your daughter has been joined

in holy wedlock to the man of her choice, instead of being yoked with one who was not worthy of her—and I speak from my own knowledge. Whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

But that announcement did not placate or prevent.

Koose and the burly man, bellowing threats, started for the head of the room.

Cap'n Sproul shouted a command. It was promptly evident that the masculine wedding guests had received some advance coaching. With one accord, they fell upon the burly man, Cap'n Sproul getting the first hold.

"Over the side with him!" cried the cap'n, and they tumbled him out of doors, and the wild uproar of what they did to him served as accompaniment to the lively scene that occurred within. Cap'n Sproul returned from the yard in order to preside over that scene.

Koose had plunged his way through the guests to the spot where the bride and groom were standing.

"Give him what I told you to give him, Kinghorn!" shouted the cap'n. "He's aching for it. He needs it. It won't be 'happy ever after' for you unless it's settled right here before witnesses."

The groom did not hesitate. He leaped forward, and the light in his eyes made the blustering coward retreat. But he could not escape.

"No, parson, you're right; that doesn't fit in just proper and precise with the ordinary wedding, such as you're used to," said the cap'n in reply to horrified protests of the clergyman while that scientific drubbing was in progress. "But this ain't the ordinary wedding. It's a back-handed elopement where there hasn't been any elopement. And if that old cuss ain't set back into the britching just where he belongs right now and at the start of things,

he'll keep fussing up two folks who deserve to live happy ever after."

After viewing the affair with critical eye for a few moments, the cap'n stepped in and rescued Koose from a son-in-law who was plainly being carried away by enthusiasm in punishment.

"Now, Koose," said the cap'n, setting those bear-trap fingers around the flabby arm, "after you have made all this disturbance at a wedding at your own house—your daughter being married right at home, where she ought to be married, and with all her friends present—after having made a nuisance of yourself, as I say, there are two options open to you: You can go out in the yard and join old Hamfat in being rid on a rail, or you can shake hands with the bridegroom and kiss the bride. I'd advise the latter, seeing that I'm in command once more. You've shown that you ain't fit to interfere in my plans. Strike up on the fiddles, there!"

There was nothing else for it!

The wedding guests came flocking around. Fair women seized old Plug Koose by the hands—the strong hands of men pushed him from behind. He went up and kissed the bride, in whose eyes there were tears that pleaded for forgiveness.

He shook hands with the bridegroom, but he blinked apprehensively when the groom's right hand shot out to meet his own.

"Now, fiddle up!" shouted Cap'n Sproul. "This thing has got back onto a wedding basis again. What woman wants to dance with the best-looking man in the room? That's me!"

On his way to the center of the floor with his partner, he passed Koose.

"You wanted something for a son-in-law with red blood in him," he whispered. "I've furnished the goods. Showing that in tastes we're similar, even if we ain't in general disposition. I wish ye Merry Christmas!"





# ON SECOND WIVES

BY HILDEGARDE LAVENDER

Author of "Ten Minutes Late," "The Old Beau's New Wife," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HARRIET ADAIR NEWCOMB

WHEREVER two or three of the feminine gender are gathered together, the masculine pronoun, third person, singular, is heard flying through the air like dandelion fluff on a windy spring day. This is a circumstance upon which commentators have already written, and also upon the twin fact that no class of woman seems exempt from the habit. Even suffragettes are not free from it; the masculine third person, singular, probably refers, in their case, to the benighted assemblyman who still opposes their measures. Shopgirls are notoriously addicted to it; and as for saleswomen—who that has waited to do her buying, patience incarnate, until two of them have ceased to reminisce concerning “him” at the ball, and “him” at “my sister-in-law’s house last Sunday afternoon,” can doubt that “he” is not only the favorite, but the exclusive, topic of conversation behind counters?

Marriage does not alter the fact. “My husband says—” “My husband always wears—” “My husband never eats—” “My husband votes the—” and so on, and so on—that is the gentle

Chant of the Married Women from their haven on the hotel piazza, from the tonneau of the touring car, from the back row of the afternoon lecture, where the universal words take on a sinister, sibilant sound from the polite effort to subordinate husband’s idiosyncrasies to the remarks of the person on the platform, who is enunciating the great truths of pragmatism—whatever they may be—or describing the beauties of the Alps, or the symbolism of medieval art. Always, what husband says, thinks, eats, wears, votes, how he sits, stands, shows worry, shows content, is affected by heat, cold, bills, company, regards his dress clothes, treats his inlaws, is poisoned by strawberries or tomatoes, and similar topics, take precedence of the world’s news where wives congregate. China becomes a republic, Roosevelt a candidate—very interesting; but “John simply hates cards”—that is the vital fact. Even when they speak but to grumble at the tradition or the natural law which makes it necessary for a woman to subordinate all other interests to her husband, still they talk of him. Sometimes

they confide to one another how they manage the strange and almost unmanageable creature, and then probably the gods on high Olympus laugh softly among themselves.

There were four of them—wives, not Olympian deities—gathered together in a nook in the rocks at one of the more modest Maine summer resorts. They made pretense of needle-work, after a tradition almost as ancient as that which relegates all a woman's other interests to a place second to her interests in her husband. One darned socks, in apparent ignorance of the fact that guaranteed hosiery makes the darning of masculine socks almost as archaic a performance as the weaving and carding of wool. But she was a comparatively new wife. Another knitted a tiny jacket of white-and-blue wool; she wore spectacles, and she was a grandmother knitting for a first grandchild; no one else could seem at once so happily expectant and so amused. The third was cross-stitching a bureau runner with a care that bespoke a wifehood young enough to be interested intensely in household belongings, and old enough to have outgrown the first crop of wedding linen. And the fourth made herself a shirt waist, with the selfishness of a maturity that occasionally works for itself, instead of for Him, His Home, or His Descendants.

The bride with the stocking basket, as was natural, was the most assured of them all in regard to all things masculine. Especially did she know how to manage Man.

"We have been married six months,"



*Waiting with patience incarnate until two of them have ceased to reminisce concerning "him" at the ball, and "him" at "my sister-in-law's house last Sunda' afternoon."*

she said proudly—she was a nice girl, although she did talk about her husband and reveal the secrets of the prison house; they were all nice women, although they all did it—"and Dick has never yet failed to be a devoted lover. I couldn't stand it if our marriage should turn out as so many of even the so-called happy ones turn out—if everything should become commonplace, if I shouldn't miss him horribly when he went away in the morning, if he shouldn't be as wild to get home to me at night as he was wild to get to see me when we were engaged. And I think," she added sagely, "that a wife has the whole matter in her own hands—in the beginning. Of course, if she doesn't set out right, there'll be no use in trying to go back and to remedy things afterward. But in the beginning—"

"What is your rule?" inquired the grandmother, starting an infinitesimal blue cuff on the tiny white sleeve, and eying the whole with a look of fond amusement.

"I—I hope you won't misunderstand me, and think I mean anything horrid, for I don't," began the little bride earnestly, "but I keep him guessing! That isn't a very ladylike expression, perhaps, but Dick uses so much slang and I pick it up. I don't mean that I flirt. Of course I don't do that—I should think it very horrid. But when he—when he—oh, well, when he asks me if I—if I—like him, you know, why, I don't always answer fervently. Sometimes I pretend that I don't—so very much! Sometimes when he comes into the house at night, calling for me, I don't answer. At least, not right away. I don't tell him the very first minute he asks what I have been doing all day. I keep little things to myself a while—like what girl came in to luncheon, and if we went to the matinée."

"What a monument of dissimulation you are!" jeered the woman who was making herself a shirt waist.

"Well, anyway," pouted the bride, "we've been married six months, and we care just as much for each other as at first. I think that is something, don't you, Grossmutter?" Not that the lady of the knitting needles was her grandmother, but every one called her by the endearing title on account of the spectacles and the blue-and-white yarn and the look of amused expectancy.

"It is, indeed. It is a good beginning," the old lady assured her kindly.

"And, of course, when we go out to dinners and dances, I always try to seem interested in what my partner or the man next me at table is saying. It makes Dick wild. Not jealous, you know—there's nothing to be jealous of—but—just wild. Anxious to get me home and to himself again, where we won't have to make believe, either of us, to be interested in what anybody else is saying."

"Good heavens!" cried the woman who was cross-stitching. "Were we all like that when we were first married, I wonder? So—do forgive me, dear—so rude and self-absorbed and selfish?"

"Oh, we both pretend to be inter-

ested! Haven't I just said so?" The bride looked almost injured, and the cross-stitcher, murmuring apologies, asked the grandmother if she could, out of her wisdom, contribute to the assembly a rule for the management of husbands.

"Oh, mine is an ancient rule. It sounds cynical, which I really am not. But it's an excellent working principle—after, let us say, the first six months of married life. It's to feed them well. Don't look so disgusted, Angelina. Your Edwin—I mean your Dick—has, of course, a mind above the seductions of food. An omelet is to him a compound of eggs, not a masterpiece of art; baked potatoes are but a humble means of nourishment, not flaky dreams of delight. Well, he may remain like that, your Edwin—Dick—but most men, as they approach middle age, take an interest in food. I studied food as my problem. To make sure that my man could not get a meal elsewhere as much to his liking as the ones he had at home—it sounds like a low ambition, an ignoble bait, doesn't it? But it worked. Sometimes you can catch even a trout with a worm when the most gaudy and glittering and expensive flies have been floated vainly in the water. You see, my Edwin was a devoted fisherman, and I've gone fishing with him. And when he was on his sportsman's trips I never moaned for pêche Melba, or other inaccessible dainties, but ate my bacon and fish and drank my coffee and condensed cream with an appetite—I had it, too! There was no dissimulation about that appetite. But it pleased my Edwin to see me appreciating the cookery of his guide and himself almost as much as it pleased me to see him led like a lamb by my cookery at home. I kept him healthy and well nourished; I made the dinner table a matter of evening interest to him. I piqued his appetite, not with spices and pungent sauces, but with curiosity. He developed into something of a gourmet under my careful training, but it was a permissible gourmetism; it wasn't gross and overfed. His club could never give him a

better meal than he could get at home; neither could any restaurant; neither could any hostess. If he had been by nature a mystic, these sordid means might not have sufficed to keep him at home; but he wasn't a mystic; and"—Grossmutter ended thoughtfully—"no more are many men."

The bride looked as if she had seen Life under very painful—almost disgusting—auspices. She was almost pale as she turned appealingly to the cross-stitcher.

"You—you—don't think it's a matter of feeding, do you?" she begged her to reply in the negative, and the cross-stitcher obliged.

"Always remember," she said saiently, "that men are only boys grown tall, and you can't miss the right way of treating them."

"Exactly," laughed Grossmutter. "The cooky jar, the doughnut pan, the jam pot."

"No, I don't mean that," Cross-stitch hastened to calm the troubled bride. "I didn't really understand all about it until my boy—my little son—began to grow up. He's five now. Then I noticed how ridiculously alike he and his father were when they were disappointed. And then how alike when they were pleased. It gave me my cue. I treat daddy as I do little Rob, with some differences, of course. I humor them both; I try not to get angry with daddy's tempers or grouchies any more than I do with little Rob's; I try to enter into his enthusiasms as I enter into little Rob's."

"I should think," observed the Lady of the Shirt Waist, "that there might come a day when 'daddy' would grow awfully weary of being babied, or might at least find it a refreshing change to be treated like a responsible human being—like an equal. Talk about the indignity of men's treating women like toys—is it any worse than the treatment this eminently good lady hands out to her spouse? Don't you ever think of him as an equal?" she ended abruptly.

When she had delivered herself of this inquiry, the Lady of the Shirt

Waist seemed to realize that she had not spoken with discretion and tact. She hastened to try to pour oil upon the troubled waters of the "mothering" wife's self-esteem by adding: "It always makes me so cross to feel that any one is treating me with a kindness and forbearance I don't deserve. I was just thinking of myself. I dare say it is a very good and workable rule with the strange race of whom we have been speaking."

"Why, but you're married, too, Lady of the Shirt Waist!" cried the bride. "Why should you call husbands a strange race?"

"Because I've been married so long," replied the Lady of the Shirt Waist enigmatically. "Perhaps when I have been married longer, like Grossmutter here, I shall understand them, and not think them strange. And I dare say that when I was a bride, and when I was a young mother, I thought I knew a good deal about them. But middle age is a terrible plateau from which to view the world and the people in it. It doesn't leave one with many illusions about one's understanding—least of all, about one's understanding of husbands."

"But you—why, you have been pointed out to me a dozen times as a wonderfully successful wife!" cried the bride, holding a sage-green sock rampant while she stared.

"That's kind of people," smiled the Lady of the Shirt Waist, beginning the frill. "But they must point out my 'Edwin' as a successful husband, too. It isn't all my doing, our successful partnership, you know."

"Do you mean that you didn't have any rule for—for-managing him?" inquired the bride, as one whose faith is threatened with destruction.

"I had a rule for managing myself, at least," replied the Lady of the Shirt Waist; and they all asked in unison, even Grossmutter looking interestedly up from her cuff, what the rule was.

"I thought a great deal about my 'Edwin's' second wife," replied she.

"His second wife!" ejaculated the mothering wife, horror in her tones.

"Do you mean—" And she fell to silence, appalled at the awful thought she had.

"Oh, I didn't know he was a widower when you were married," said the bride at the same time. She spoke with a gentle, but firm, reproof. It was evident that she was not going to encourage any such poaching upon the preserves of eternal first love as second wives—third wives—horrors!—would imply.

"He wasn't a widower. I am not the

the one inevitable fact of nature. It is certain that either he or I will die first—almost certain; we haven't got an automobile," she mentioned grimly. "And quite likely it will be I. Why not? And in that case—"

"He would not marry again!" cried the bride. "Never, never, never!"

"No nice woman would want another woman's place," declared the wife who mothered her husband, "and your husband certainly must like only nice women!" But Grossmutter smiled



*"It pleased my Edwin to see me appreciating the cookery of his guide and himself."*

third Mrs. Brown. The second wife of whom I think is the lady who will prove my successor in case I pass over the border first." The Shirt Waist Lady made her declaration placidly as she stroked the gathers in the frill with a practiced needle.

"Oh!" cried the bride indignantly. "You speak as if you didn't loathe the thought of her! You speak as if you thought your husband could be guilty of such—such forgetfulness! Such disrespect to your memory! It is abominable! I should have it stopped by law! He cares for you too much ever to marry again if you—if you—"

"If I should die first. For Heaven's sake, don't stutter so over mentioning

comprehendingly upon the Lady of the Shirt Waist.

"What nonsense you dear, romantic young things talk!" cried she. "Look about you. How many widowers do you know who have continued to wear the willow for their first wives—good, honest, delightful men, too, some of them? Look back upon your earlier youth. In how many of the homes you visited was there a stepmother at the head, doing a wonderful work of love with the first wife's children? Don't be silly, dears. Of course, there are second wives and second wives—but on the whole, they are a pretty useful, noble lot of women."

"At any rate," declared the bride al-

most vindictively, "if I die and my Dick should marry again—but he wouldn't! He couldn't! It isn't just an ordinary marriage—ours. It's the deepest that is in each of us seeking the deepest in the other. It's—oh, he couldn't marry again! But if he did she'd never have the Dick I have had!" she ended triumphantly. And after she had rolled this comforting morsel of thought about in her mind for a minute, she added: "But I don't see how thinking of your husband's second wife could possibly make a rule of conduct for you. What did you mean by it?"

"Nothing very high and noble," admitted the Lady of the Shirt Waist. "I simply made up my mind, at an early stage in the married game, that she should never be able to make my husband sigh with content over any good thing that he had missed with me. You see, I am selfishly making her job just as hard for her as I know how."

"I don't think I quite understand," said the bride in bewilderment. "You seem able to tolerate the idea of his marrying again, and yet you say that you want to make it as hard as possible for your successor. That doesn't sound to me very logical."

"Oh, I don't run to embrace the idea of a successor." The philosopher on the subject of second wives looked a little sadly at her blouse, and tested her sewing by a gentle pull or two. "But I bow gracefully to the inevitable. Most widowers do marry again. If I die first, my husband will probably marry again—poor fellow! He would be dreadfully unhappy drifting about without some feminine anchor. Well,

if I die first, I hope he will marry again, and that he'll get a nice, good woman, who will do her best to make him comfortable. Only—I am making her work hard for her. The little bride here said triumphantly, apropos of this second-wife bugbear, that at any rate her successor would never have the Dick that she has had. Well, my successor, so far as I have been able to accomplish it, will never be able to give my husband anything that he hasn't had in its perfection already—anything pleasant that isn't associated through and through with the thought of me—anything fine that isn't me at my best. Do you see?"

Grossmutter looked at her and nodded, but the other two managers of men merely turned dazed eyes upon her.

"Why, see here!" she exclaimed. "Take the matter of tidiness, for example. I am not by nature a tidy person. It is my inborn tendency to strew my belongings all over the house, to leave my top bureau drawer looking as though a cyclone had struck it, to keep my



*Herriet Allen Newson*  
"I noticed how ridiculously alike he and his father were."

desk in the wildest disorder. Well, my good William Brown didn't seem to mind those idiosyncrasies when we were engaged, so far as he encountered them then; all that he saw of them was the blown curl of my tresses, so to speak. Even after we had been married a little while, he did not seem to notice the tumultuous, chaotic effect I produced upon the inanimate objects around me. But once we went on a visit to a cousin of his, one of those women who are undoubtedly born with card catalogues in their hands. I didn't like her much, but I had to admit that her rooms were more restful than mine.

And my good William Brown said, when we left her place: 'What a comfortable house Nettie's is!' Maybe I didn't think about that innocent remark all the way home! Maybe I didn't think of it that evening, when William made a fruitless search of the entire kitchen, dining room, and pantries for the bottle opener, which was discovered two days later in my bottom bureau drawer! Don't ask me how it got there. I don't know; I haven't the ghost of an idea. But there it was. And when William put on his hat somewhat ill-temperedly, and went out to the local hardware store for a new opener before enjoying his mild bottle of beer, I reflected bitterly that he would never have had such an experience at his Cousin Nettie's. And I said to myself vindictively that perhaps I would die, and then they could marry, and he could live surrounded by everything in its right place. That idea amused me a little, for I knew that Nettie wasn't a charmer—not even as much of a charmer as I myself. But from that idea grew another. Suppose that I should die, and that he should marry, not Nettie, with her narrowness, her acidulousness, and the rest, but a nice girl, a fine, cheerful, companionable girl, who nevertheless did know how to keep things where they belonged. I was more jealous of that not impossible she than I have ever had any cause to be of a real, tangible human woman in my life. But she did me good. I swore that she should not make my William more comfortable than I made him. I swore that I would develop orderliness and system, since these seemed to make for masculine comfort. When William came back, his momentary annoyance quite dissipated by his walk, and his enthusiasm roused by a new and marvelously improved sort of bottle opener, I think he was surprised at the fervency of my greeting.

"He never knew how hard I worked to develop habits of orderliness. You see, I had made my discovery in time; the bugbear of the second wife with a place for everything and everything in its place began its great work of re-

form while there was still a chance for me. William was still more concerned with my perfections than with the discovery of my imperfections; so that I had a chance to work toward the removal of these latter without attracting his attention. And as things gradually grew better—as it began to be a rarer and rarer thing for the corkscrew to be mislaid, or the writing paper to be in the workbasket, and the spools in the desk; as it slowly came about that the laundry was always sorted when it was brought home, and that his handkerchiefs were in the proper compartment of his bureau, and his socks in their own place—why, he simply took it all for granted, and never knew of the really terrible uphill struggle it had been for me. But you can see that no second wife can ever do my memory injury by her systematic ways. I am systematic, and William doesn't even know it. Our household runs on wheels oiled with that best of all domestic lubricants—order; and he cherishes the fond delusion that he married a harum-scarum, fly-away, impractical, but quite lovable, person.

"I wasn't a beauty, even in my earlier days. And sometimes the second wife appeared to me wearing the features of Venus of Milo, or a Helen of Troy. And then I despaired. I couldn't, from the gold bar of heaven, compete with any such successor as that. But gradually a saving thought came to me. It was this: A man ceases to observe his wife after a while, just as he ceases to watch the sun when it is well up and about its business. If he marries Leonarda da Vinci's lady with the smile—you know, the stolen one—why, by and by he doesn't notice her eyes, or her brow, or her wonderful lips in any really perceptive way. But if his wife creates about herself an atmosphere of—I hate the word, but I don't know an unobjectionable synonym—an atmosphere of daintiness, he will miss that when it disappears. Now, every one can be charming personally, can be elegant personally. I mean every one who has been kindly placed by Heaven in the circle of those own-

ing bathtubs. I couldn't be a beauty to compete with any ravishing second wife, but I could be as elegant as she—not expensively elegant, you understand; merely spotlessly, freshly, crisply elegant. And I have been. There are no dingy-looking bureau scarfs on the bureaus in any room that I inhabit; there are no faded pincushions; there are no tarnished brushes or dust-dropping powder jars, or dimmed photograph frames. It is all as fresh and bright and charming as the second Mrs. William's can be, even if she is a beauty and keeps a maid or two to attend merely to her. Work? Oh, yes, Grossmutter! It's been hard, hard work often and often! But when I've felt like giving in, I've remembered the second wife, and have determined that she shouldn't beat me there.

"Quite early I made the discovery that the Lady of the Cross-stitch has made, although I was so cross with her for thinking it alone a rule for managing husbands—namely, that there was much in common between the lords of creation and the little, knickerbockered boys who run to us to have their fingers bound, and their balls mended, and their little stomachs filled, and their little hearts soothed. I found that William liked an eager interest displayed in all his plans and schemes. It isn't always easy to work up an eager interest in the plans of even the best of husbands or the dearest of little boys. But if it isn't done they go away and feel lonesome—and maybe—oh, maybe—along comes Mrs. Second Wife, Mrs. Stepmother, and gives them what one didn't happen to feel like giving one's self at some particular moment when they asked for it. William has a passion for planning houses. He thinks that he ought to have been an architect—he is a very good lawyer, though I say it as shouldn't. Well, when William sits down on a winter evening and draws a new plan for a bungalow he has no intention of building, or of a pergola that nobody wants, it is sometimes difficult to remove my interest from my book and enter whole-heartedly into the bungalow or the pergola.

But the picture of that second wife has made me do it—not feign an interest, for William is no fool, and can detect a note of insincerity with the relentless speed of a cross-examiner—but actually work up an interest in the wretched things.

"That second wife has made me tramp with William when I longed with all my lazy heart to lie before the fire and dream. She has made me actually cultivate a taste for Greek poetry—in translation—because I was so disturbed at the thought that she might be able to enter deeply into William's love of Euripides and Sophocles, and thereby to give him something that he had lacked with me. But all of those are little side issues compared to the one great thing she made me do."

"I should say it was more than enough," muttered the little bride. "If he didn't like you as you were——"

"He did, as far as he knew me. That was why he married me, and thereby subjected himself to a much profounder acquaintance with me. It was the new sides of my character, never shown in the comparative ceremoniousness of courtship, which might possibly have worn his affection a little thin if I hadn't reformed—at the instigation of that hobgoblin, the second wife, who should have all the virtues that I lacked. And one of those virtues was thrift. I hadn't been properly brought up as far as money was concerned, that is certain. And when, upon my marriage, I became the feminine head of a house, the controller of a certain sum each month, the possessor of accounts at most of the shops—well, not to put too fine a point upon it, I plunged William into debt, and I kept him there for two or three years. I simply could not seem to manage my income—William's income—aright. I had no housekeeping budget; I said to myself that certain things were necessary—of course one had to have them. And I ordered them. I set aside no sum for the replenishing of household goods, or the refurnishing of my wardrobe. When I needed things for the house, I went and bought them. When I needed

clothes I went and bought them. I needed a good many clothes, and of good quality. I was easily able to persuade myself that this was all right—that it must be all right. For was I doing anything more extravagant than the other women of my circle, and did any of their husbands have a larger income than my William? The answer to both questions, in my mind, was 'No.' And so I went on, worrying a good deal about the stupid way in which the debit and credit sides of my books would never balance, but 'taking it out' in worry. Every once in a while William and I would go over the whole affair, and I would receive an extra check to settle things and start even again. And once I even went to my father, and made a clean breast of my shortcomings, and asked him to 'lend' me some money. He sighed, although he signed me a check willingly enough, and he begged me not to lead my husband what he called a 'debtor's life.' 'It's hell!' he said; and there was something in his voice that made me realize he knew all about it. And I remembered that the legends of my mother, who died when I was ten, was that she had been as extravagant as she had been charming. It made me miserable. I felt that heredity had doomed me. And then William discovered about father's check, and wrote father, sending another one back to pay it; and he told me quite severely that he could maintain his own household without aid. You must not think I endured the rebuke meekly. I didn't. I had a good fighting temper, and as I could never see that second wife charming William by meekness, I never broke myself of the fighting habit. I flared up over



"When I needed clothes I went and bought them."

the check episode, and we quarreled, and then we made it up again. But William looked worried even after I had avowed my guilt and had wept out my penitence and intention of reform on his shoulder. And that night I saw the second wife as a person in whom her husband could safely trust, not only his honor, but his pocketbook. I got up the next morning, determined to conquer the shiftless habit, whether it was inherited or not. And compared to that task of making myself a careful, responsible creature in my financial dealings with the world, all my other makings over were trifles. Oh, how I worked! How I did arithmetic! How I prepared budgets—so much for this, and so much for that, and so much for the reserve fund, and so much for the

hideous bundle of old bills. How I learned to walk by on the other side when the shop windows were ravishingly lovely with furs, or rugs, or new spring stuffs. How I learned to put down all my little luxuries in favor of my William's one great luxury—a free atmosphere in which to work, an atmosphere untroubled by the harassments of debt. And the person who helped me put through that job was, as before, the second wife—the second wife, who, if I was not careful, was going to be able to give William something that he greatly desired, and that I had not given him. I owe that woman a lot."

They all looked at her a little queerly as she fell into silence and gazed from the nook of rocks toward the great sea pensively. The little bride's eyes sparkled angrily; the young mother looked dazed; and only Grossmutter smiled with full comprehension and patted the Shirt Waist Lady's hand.

"What I should like to know," snapped the bride, "is what your William did in the line of making himself over out of fear of your second hus-

band. I bet he never even thought of that dim, shadowy person!"

"He probably didn't. It isn't a masculine habit," replied the seer of the second wife tranquilly. "Men aren't so fond of impaling themselves upon pins and watching their own spiritual contortions as women are. But—" She smiled her appreciation of William's character.

"Ah!" said Grossmutter, making her steel needles fly again. "You two youngsters don't see it, but the truth is that our Shirt Waist Lady's image of the perfect second wife filling her William's life with peace and sunshine was only the image of love. It was love, and no dread of a rival in the days to come, that made her what she is to him. And affection probably molded her William anew without his fantasy of a second husband."

"Oh!" said the bride doubtfully; and "Oh!" said the young mother in relieved tones. But the Lady of the Shirt Waist said:

"You must not take her credit from her—William's second wife! Such a wonderful person as she is!"



### Familiar with One Crowd

**M**ISS HELEN TAFT, the president's daughter, is a conscientious church worker and teaches a class of small boys at St. John's during each winter.

One day she was trying to explain to one of her pupils several things regarding the Episcopal Church.

"Now, Herbert," she said, "what are the Thirty-nine Articles?"

"I don't know," answered the boy, considerably embarrassed by his ignorance. Then, his face brightening, he exclaimed gleefully: "But I can tell you all about the 'Forty Thieves'!"



### On Familiar Ground

**M**R. NICHOLAS LONGWORTH, who was Alice Roosevelt, is famous in Washington society as a wit. She never loses an opportunity to put over a joke. At the silver wedding of President and Mrs. Taft, she was one of the guests.

During the evening a diplomat was presented to her, and, as they strolled through the grounds, she saw that he had not heard her name when they were introduced. Finally he said:

"Have you ever been at the White House before?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Longworth replied, without cracking a smile, "I used to work here."

# THE LITTLE MANAGER

BY VIRGINIA KLINE

**H**E'S the best ever," insisted Crowley, the comedian, to his good-looking companion, as they crossed to their dressing rooms.

"Oh, he's all to the good in his own province. But does he stick to it? No! He thinks he can manage the box office, the press work, the theater staff, the orchestra, the stage, the actors—and, by George!—he has the nerve to think he can put over the acting to boot!" exploded Wickersham, the decidedly popular and petted juvenile, in a fury at the unprecedented experience of being interfered with.

"Who are you grilling?" teased a joyous voice behind them, belonging to a radiant girl in trim dark blue, a dazzling blue hat setting off unusually rich, blond coloring.

"No use telling you, for you'd immediately snatch the victim off the grill," growled Wickersham, with a sidelong glance at the blooming face that belied any anger with its owner.

"Depends upon the victim," she chaffed.

Wickersham sneered—an unheard-of thing for him, for he was the best of fellows, and hadn't many sneers in him. "Well, there isn't a woman in the theater who wouldn't go through the fire to rescue this one—for every woman in the theater is head over heels—"

"Oho!" laughed the girl breezily. "You needn't go on. You mean—the Little Manager—bless 'im! Of course we love him. Who wouldn't? He's the dearest boy in the world."

"Then there's no more to be said,"



muttered Wickersham, wincing at her evident sincerity. He turned into his room and unceremoniously shut the door.

The girl looked startled and hurt. She bit the lip that would quiver, and started to pass on when Crowley laid a detaining hand on her arm and whispered:

"Don't mind him just now, Marjorie. He's sore. He and Harrison have had a run-in over this part. You know the piece hasn't gone as well as it should, and so much depends on how Wickersham scores. He isn't playing up to the possibilities of the part, and Harrison thinks he's hurting the performance."

"Bob Harrison is right—even if he is a manager!" declared Marjorie Lowe. "He isn't an actor, but he has a sure dramatic instinct, and, besides—it's his theater, his money, his risk, and all he has in the world is at stake. I wish Teddy would listen to reason!"

"Ted Wickersham is a clever, hot-headed, all-fired stubborn kid. He's set

in his idea, and he won't budge if he loses his job. Harrison's put it up to him, you know!"

"What!"

The girl paled, and Crowley hastened to take advantage of his suspicion.

"See here," Marjorie Lowe—Ted thinks the stars rise and set for you. You talk a little common sense into him. This argument is coming to a climax tonight. If Ted doesn't give in and play up to Harrison's idea—Ted goes. For Heaven's sake—"

"Trust me," said the girl, raising blue eyes full of character to Crowley's keen gray ones.

"Jove, if I don't!" murmured the comedian, flying up the stairs, for it was getting late.

Miss Lowe stood irresolute, trying to come to some decision, which was reached when she knocked boldly at Wickersham's door.

"What is it?" demanded a curt voice within.

She did not answer, but knocked once more.

An impatient hand turned the knob, and a disheveled brown head was thrust out. The scowl disappeared instantly, and the gruff voice softened to a remarkable degree.

"Marjorie—oh—do you want to speak to me?"

"Not now—before the first act. Yes?"

"Rather!"

Marjorie made her way up to the ingénue's dressing room, and did some important thinking as she carefully applied the rouge and powder, and donned her soft, trailing robe, looking like nothing so much as a big pink rose.

Wickersham was keeping his tryst in the wings when she found her way to him. The orchestra was in, and the tender strains of a popular waltz song set their feet and pulses dancing.

"Hello, Teddy!"

"Hello, Meggy!"

"How do you think the play is going?" broached Marjorie, executing a dance step and gazing nowhere in particular.

"Well enough. The play isn't the

best ever written, and will never be one of the six best sellers, you can bet on that."

"I think it's an unusual play, with some unusual situations, and one big opportunity for one lucky person," asserted Marjorie stanchly.

"Where's the opportunity, and who's the lucky devil?" inquired Wickersham skeptically.

"The third act's the act, and you're the—individual referred to," said the girl, with conviction.

The young juvenile's mien lost its eloquent admiring expression, and became coldly proud and resentful once more.

"You've been talking with Harrison. You're in cahoots with him. As I mentioned earlier—we won't discuss this matter." He fairly turned his back.

Marjorie gulped down her offended feelings, stood her ground, and spoke to his apparently deaf ears.

"You needn't ever speak to me again," she said, "after this. I shall certainly never speak to you again. But—I want you to understand that up to this moment I've had your best interests at heart, and haven't wanted you to throw a big chance over. You're as clever as you can be—but you've a heap to learn! Bob Harrison—even if he is a manager—has a heap to teach. You listen to him, Teddy Wickersham, and don't, whatever you do, give up the engagement. You can make the play if you will—think of that! And if you don't—let me tell you there's something lacking in you—as sure as you are an actor."

The ingénue, having made her meaning indisputably plain, disappeared before her keenly attentive listener descended to revolve for response, and just a breathing space before the first scene.

The crucial test of the play was the third act.

As the curtain descended on the second, the half-filled theater applauded lukewarmly, and the actors, a good deal discouraged, sauntered to their dressing rooms in little cliques, discussing their flat reception.

"I can see a notice going up on Saturday night," prophesied Crowley lugubriously.

"Quoth the raven—nevermore—after this week," croaked another.

"Stop it," commanded Miss Lowe. "Here comes—"

A slender man of slightly more than medium height, olive-skinned, rather delicate-looking, with deep, dark, luminous eyes, and a fine, sensitive mouth, approached the center of the discussion, and, with a wave of his lean, brown, expressive hand, called the scattered groups together.

Every one, with the exception of Wickersham, looked on him with approval and affection.

A stage hand nudged his assistant.

"Gee—the Little Manager's on the warpath. What's doing?"

"Fireworks—you can lay y'r life on that—if he gits started. Do you mind the time—"

"Say, he's a prince though, ain't he?" interrupted the other. "After gettin' his way an' lettin' every dang one of us go—danged if he didn't take every dang one of us back—an' ain't opened his head about it since."

"He's the real article, that's w'y," judged the other, a great hulking fellow, "Big Dan" Murphy, who would have laid down his life for the autocrat of their theater. And so all the working staff felt—every one of them. Indeed, every actor, every musician, every usher, every single employee in and around the place loved him—except young Wickersham.

As he stood there now, in the midst of the men and women who represented the life and spirit of his enterprise, the Little Manager's voice trembled somewhat in the beginning as he addressed them.

"Boys and girls," he said, "this play is going badly, and it's my pet, as I've told you over and over. I can't find anything wrong with the piece, but there's something wrong somewhere with the way it's being done. It's too slow, in the first place, and we're playing too many solo parts. Now—we've got to pull together! I put it to you—

will you work on the play with me to make a success? Otherwise—we will be compelled to close in two weeks. We're losing every day—and we can't afford it. It'll go hard with every one of us if we do close. The season is advanced. Work is scarce. What do you say?"

The Little Manager had a way of saying "we" instead of "I," of incorporating them into the very heart of his theater, that could not but win the emotional, impulsive Children of the Drama.

"Go ahead!" "Go ahead!" "Do your worst!" "Do your best!" "We're with you!" "Whatever you say!" "It's up to you!" mingled, and jumbled tenor, soprano, contralto, and bass in an encouraging chorus of consent.

There was no dissenting voice, and but one silent tongue.

The "boys and girls" all vibrated with hope and fear as the Little Manager faced Wickersham.

"And you, Ted?" The tone was very persuasive, very kind.

"I play as I have played. I can't change my conception at this late date," replied Wickersham stubbornly, head in the air.

"All right, children. Thank you," said the Little Manager cheerfully to the others.

Joining the young juvenile, he took his arm chummily and accompanied him to the door of his dressing room.

Marjorie Lowe was but a step or two behind them. She could not help hearing Harrison say: "I'll see you after the performance, Ted."

When he slipped out of the stage entrance, Marjorie once more called to the rebellious member: "Teddy!"

"Yes?"

"Teddy—play the last act as you've never played it. Show your good will. Show what a dear you are. Play with us—instead of 'agin' us. Teddy—"

But he would not be moved. His handsome face quivered as he made his choice, and he knew he had infinitely more than his "job" at stake, but he did make his final choice then and there.



*"And you, Ted?" The tone was very persuasive, very kind.*

"I play as I have played. I know what I'm doing!"

"You know what you're doing!" flashed the girl. "Do you?"

He had no answer for her evident meaning, and each went his way.

After the performance there was a notice tacked up on the bulletin board. All concerned crowded around to read:

Rehearsal to-morrow. 10:30 a. m. promptly.

"War is declared," said Crowley ominously.

"And I've gone over to the enemy," murmured Marjorie, with a deeply troubled glance at Wickersham, who, whistling gayly, swung off to his narrow refuge to find Harrison there before him.

"You'll excuse me for intruding, but I must detain you for a few moments, Ted. I merely want to say this: You think things over carefully between now and to-morrow's rehearsal, and make up your mind what you want to do. Keep a cool head. Study each pro and con,

and weigh the results accurately. We want you and need you—but remember, my boy—you need us, too." Harrison spoke gently, but beneath his consideration and generous handling was the ring of an iron purpose determined upon its course.

Wickersham answered coolly, with a slight undertone of contempt: "Very well. I'll think it over."

Harrison hesitated, as if to make another remark or two, but, receiving no encouragement, took himself off. He was a good deal depressed with the situation. It had taken years to build his own theater, assemble his own company, make his own productions. He was willing to gamble his all on a venture, but he did long for a square deal from those closely associated with him. Sympathy, understanding, camaraderie were essential to the Little Manager.

"The need of sympathetic coöperation is my chief vice and my main weakness—but I can't overcome it. I can't work with the thought against me.

Harmony is the center of the wheel, and my hand's off the lever when the spokes get twisted," he had once declared.

At ten-thirty the following morning, the players appeared as requested. The director was stationed at his table down center back of the footlights, but he was inactive, for Harrison was about to conduct the rehearsal.

The actors were all more or less bored, but managed to appear gracious, and accepted suggestions with at least outward sanction.

When it came to Wickersham's scene in the third act—for they were only going over and "pulling up" certain weak places—every one held his breath, for every one knew the rehearsal had been called especially for that critical spot in the play.

Wickersham interpreted as usual, and Harrison interfered as usual. Finally Wickersham lost his temper, and stood still, with his arms folded, refusing to repeat a line.

The battle was on.

"Will you proceed, Mr. Wickersham?" asked Harrison politely.

Wickersham kept a stony silence.

"Go on, Mr. Wickersham," urged the director, with an ingratiating smile for the actor, and a slight wink toward Harrison. "We are all anxious to play as nearly according to the management's idea as we can."

The director happened to resent the management's idea with all his soul, but he was an ingrained diplomat, and, besides, he felt that, the bad season considered, half a play's worth was better than no play at all. If Bob Harrison wanted to make a mess of things—let him go ahead and welcome!

Marjorie Lowe bent all her splendid will on the exasperating but adorable juvenile—with no effect.

"Come, Mr. Wickersham," pleaded the Little Manager, with characteristic patience, "we are losing time. We must not detain the others any longer than is necessary. Will you—"

"I'll be damned if I do!" Wickersham was at white heat. Taking the manuscript of the part from a pocket,

he laid it on the table with a forceful thud that accentuated his next speech. "I'm through. It's an actor's business to act, a director's to direct, and a manager's to run the theater. If you know more about acting than I do, why don't you act? Is it because it doesn't require brains to run a theater? In that case, perhaps, we could exchange places. Perhaps I have brains enough to run the box office!"

He turned on his heel, the company gasping, but Harrison laid his cool, fine, artistic hand on the actor's shoulder, and said, with an excited little laugh:

"I take you, old chap! Come out to the box office, and we'll arrange Evans"—to the director—"carry on the rehearsals. I'll join you in fifteen minutes."

Wickersham stared, unable to believe his ears, which grew hot as the buzz of unreproved comment from all over the stage reached him and convinced him that he had heard aright.

The antagonists walked out of rehearsal, through the auditorium, into the business end of the theater.

Harrison returned in precisely a quarter of an hour—good or bad for Wickersham, the players had no way of telling. At any rate, the Little Manager was radiant and jocular, and made his newest announcement with unforeseen humbleness and the same old underlying authority:

"Boys and girls—I don't pretend to know your trade better than you do. I happen to have seen this comedy in Paris last summer. I was infatuated with it, had it translated by an American, and made up my mind to show the world how American actors could interpret it. Now, I haven't invented new ideas of its interpretation. I merely want this particular character to be played in proper relation to the other characters. I should like to give you at least a suggestion of what I mean. Any hints or help from any of you will be greatly appreciated."

There was much genuine applause from the half circle about the stage, and Wickersham, standing in a deep shadow at the back of the dim auditorium, saw

Miss Lowe giving her approval with unmistakable enthusiasm. A bitter sense of his dismal prospect overwhelmed the erstwhile juvenile, and he vanished, with a stiffening upper lip, into his freshly acquired domain.

"Here's the manuscript, Mr. Harrison," said the stage director affably, picking up the pages the predecessor had thrown down.

"Thanks—no. I've never missed a rehearsal. I'm fairly easy in the lines."

The director hemmed and hawed in his amazement, and began with a great assumption of dignity to boss his "boss."

"I'll go over the scene without steaming up at first, if you don't mind, to gain your confidence in regard to cues and action," said Harrison deferentially to his now superior officer.

"Quite right," agreed the director, showing not the slightest sign of his amusement.

Harrison rehearsed as he did most things—coolly, quietly, deliberately, marking out each action, reading with great naturalness and intelligence, and thoroughly lending himself to, and leaning upon, those who were laboring with him.

The plastic and impressionable players were swift to adapt themselves, to take the keynote, and soon the troublesome third act was taking on another tone. Right or wrong—something had happened to the jerky movement of it. The effect remained to be seen.

Wickersham was in a fever of impatience for the curtain to rise that night. No announcement of the change had been made, according to Harrison's express command. The house was lamentably scattered as to numbers, and those present were biased beforehand by the apparent lack of popularity of the entertainment they had just squandered money to witness.

Wickersham, who knew nothing about "papering" a theater, or anything else pertaining to the bringing of throngs within its brown-and-gold elegance, stood awkwardly about, feeling like a very lonely fish in foreign waters.

The box office "boys," the ticket man,

and all connected with the business end, treated him with marked respect, as if under orders, but he felt their inward derision. Heretofore, whenever Wickersham had had occasion to pass through the front of the theater, he had always done so with a distinct sense of superiority, which had not failed to leave its impression.

The old man who gathered in the tickets slipped inside, when his duties were over, and watched the Little Manager with the bright eyes of loyalty.

"He's a winner!" he muttered, as Harrison acquitted himself admirably in his unwonted rôle—with remarkable ease and an assurance that was quite breath-taking.

In the third act, a violin had to be played off scene because the former juvenile had had no experience as a violinist. To-night the substitute, to the delight of the old ticket man and the audience, handled the orchestra leader's fine instrument with loving skill, and added the completing touch to the "big minute."

"That's a fine bit o' work," said the old man to Wickersham, who stood next to him, leaning over the rail at the back. "There's devil a few actors could do that, now!"

"Devil a few—you're right," conceded the young man, his eyes opening wider and wider, his jaw falling lower and lower. Never before had he thought of a manager other than as a manager, with the grubbing mind of a manager, the greedy hands of a manager, and the cast-iron feelings of a manager. Here was a man who could play a part better than the best juvenile in town, lay his hands on a violin, and draw searching music from it, and reach out in the spirit of the character he was portraying and carry "the people" along with him. Wickersham felt crushed with humiliation.

"It takes nothin' so much as brains to act," pronounced the old St. Peter, who had admitted thousands upon thousands of ticket holders into the paradise of the playhouse in his day, and was a terrifyingly shrewd judge of plays, actors, and audience.

"There may be some truth in that," admitted Wickersham, with a strange smile.

"And ain't he handsome in that get-up, with that bit o' paint. My, my—what a bit o' paint will do! Who'd ever think now, he was nothin' but a manager?" This last was meant for a sly hit, and did not miss its intended victim.

"Tom," said the young juvenile, half timidly, "how do they 'paper' a house? Who gets the passes, and what's the best class to reach? And does it do any good to force a real play? I'd like to learn something about my end of it."

"Well, it's this way——"

"It's not against the rules to give instructions?" interrupted Wickersham.

"Devil a bit! We was all given instructions to toe to your line."

The ticket man's face shone with pleasure and secret triumph, for the young juvenile had made it only too plain from his first haughty entrance into the organization that he scorned all advice, and jolly well knew what he was about.

"It's up to me!" declared Wickersham to himself, after the third act. "And I've got to hustle. He's squared the play—he's beaten me—he's got it on me—but—I'm going to get it on him. With all his infernal cleverness, he couldn't bring the crowd. He's never brought the crowd in any production. He's playing a losing game in the box office. I'm going to show him a trick or two. I'm going to go him one better than he's gone me—hanged if I don't!"

Wickersham retired to the managerial den and locked himself in for an hour, wearing out the excellent rug with ceaseless pacing, and nervously chewing the end of a pencil as he savagely searched for a great idea.



*Wickersham smoked cigarette after cigarette, watching the process ion w. intense interest.*

The Little Manager's initial appearance on any stage was on Thursday night, but the Sunday editions acquainted him in startling headlines that he opened his official season on the following Monday night.

Suddenly, without any warning whatever, right there in his suite at the hotel, in the hilarious and unsympathetic presence of three choice "pals"—Harrison's knees began to shake, and his body to tremble. A sickening premonition paled his cheeks and chilled his blood.

"Look—boys!" he whispered hoarsely, pointing to the columns and columns of press matter, all staring his advent into the actor's realm, exclaiming, prophesying, guying, scoffing!

"Holy—Hamlet!" roared Behman, a fellow manager and former employer of Wickersham's. The three shook with fiendish glee.

"I gave strict orders for no mention

of my appearance. I only gave a little practical demonstration of what I wanted. My—word—this is a pretty mess!"

The Little Manager hastened to open a fresh box of extra-strong cigars.

"It's up to you good and plenty!" warned George Taylor, still chuckling. Taylor was one of the few who never interfered with the region beyond the footlights.

"And I wrote Wickersham a long night letter, full of threats if he failed to appear this afternoon for a conference. This settles it. He's got to go on to-morrow night!"

The Little Manager bounded to the telephone.

Behman sent out for the rest of the Sunday papers. Each elaborately reviewed Harrison's past career as an original and successful producer, and measured his chances for a Booth-Mansfieldian future. The unique feature of the space devoted was the exquisitely humorous story of his difference with the juvenile—and its result! It stared him in the face, highly spiced, richly colored, worthy, in point of invention and detail, of Mark Twain plus Conan Doyle plus Anna Katherine Green—and "then some."

A symposium of prominent members of his clubs—"The Monks," the "Rams," "The Sock and Buskins," "The Play Room"—adorned section after section with chaff and chatter.

"Of all the glorious press-agent stunts ever perpetrated—this is the limit. I envy you," said Taylor, with genuine admiration.

Harrison's head whirled.

"Only two days and a night between him and the awful occasion!"

"I've just had Wickersham on the wire. He refuses to confer. Says it's not an actor's place to dictate to his manager—I being the actor! Furthermore, he insists upon my living up to the letter of the contract—which won't be up until next Thursday. What do you think of his impudence?"

"You're not showing the white feather?" jeered Frothingham, musical

producer, his face wrinkling up in a spasm of malicious fun.

"Ha! You would be a Thespian, would you, and desert our ranks!" gloated Taylor, when he could get his breath.

"I don't mind telling you," informed Behman, "that we're all going in battalions to-morrow night. All your clubs will buy blocks of seats, all the playgoer organizations will be there, whole garlands of matinée girls; all the half raters and the whole raters, anybody, everybody, high, low, and middle class—all—all will be there—as sure as a hat. You've got to be one colossal hit—or the whole of New York will be demanding a rebate!"

"My—word!" The Little Manager sank limply into a chair. "Who in H-hades—p-put the infernal thing over? You don't suppose—" His eyes opened wide.

"Precisely, my boy," finished Taylor. "He did it! That is to say—your fair exchange—the sub in the front of the house. And let me tell you—any time he wants a job as a pressman—send him to me. Gee! An actor to play a trump card like this! I ask you—does it take brains to run a theater?"

"I wonder?" said the Little Manager thoughtfully, opening a bottle of wine, and tremulously pouring four deep drafts. "Here's to to-morrow night, fellows—or death!"

They drank.

A long and ever-increasing line stood for hours in front of the box office on Monday. Wickersham smoked cigarette after cigarette, watching the procession with intense interest. He was keyed up to concert pitch, and conscious of more mixed emotions than he had ever felt in all his gay young life. For the first time in his experience, he was truly alive to the great purpose of the theater. Heretofore, it had always seemed to him that the actor was the most important factor. The actor must be considered, the actor must be cajoled, petted, flattered, the outside world must reach over the footlights to the mimic world and fall down at the feet of the

mimes. All at once, Wickersham, gazing at this interminable line of ticket buyers upon whom the actors were dependent, saw it as a slowly moving picture of the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the happy and the miserable, the strong and the weak, the good and the bad. He felt his spirit go out to embrace them. He knew at last that, as an actor, he belonged to them, not they to him! As a man, he ceased to identify himself exclusively with his own ilk. He became universal. He throbbed with the desire to strive to penetrate this line of human hearts—to become something more than a charming personality, to strike out for the real and the true!

A miracle had happened to Wickersham—and he knew it!

He retired to his office to pore over the receipts and correspondence, learning something every minute about the expense and responsibility of running a playhouse. Every avenue seemed to lead to the theater. Bills from everywhere, requests from everywhere, advice from everywhere! Wickersham knitted his unbusinesslike brows, and set to work.

On the dot of eight, the Little Manager stood in the wings, leaning against a stage brace, with Crowley close beside him. He was painfully quiet, and smoked incessantly. There were lines of strain about his eyes and mouth.

Crowley couldn't stand it.

"See here, Mr.—Mr.—" He hesitated. The old, deferential address of the actor to the manager seemed too absurd in the situation.

"What is it, Crowley? The name's Bob, you know," supplied the Little Manager whimsically.

"See here—Bob," said the comedian, with difficulty, "take it easy. Forget the gang out there, and remember that what you told us the other day works to-night for all it's worth. You're not playing alone! You're playing with the rest of us, and we'll float you if you feel you're drowning."

"But suppose my lines go entirely? My head feels like a blank now," suggested Harrison miserably.

"Oh—we always feel like that on nights like this. It's a good sign. You just depend upon us. You don't know the *genus* actor very well. You don't know how we can help—or harm—when once we get out before the footlights. We can steal each other's paints or we can 'feed' 'em—just according to the breed of animal one happens to be."

Marjorie Lowe had stolen up, looking, with her burning cheeks and shining eyes, more like the soul of a beautiful pink flower than ever.

"Remember," she said soothingly, "Crowley is Ted's understudy, and can throw you any line you need. Besides, you've the prompt book in the wings—and me."

"You?"

"Yes. You've your three best scenes with me, and I can help you carry them if you'll only trust me!"

Harrison looked into her strong, sweet face as Crowley had looked once before, and replied much as Crowley had:

"Trust you!—it's the day's best bet."

Yet, when the entrance cue came, the Little Manager's throat dried, and his muscles stiffened. He forced himself to go mechanically through the first half of what he could not compel himself to regard as other than a terrible and nerve-destroying ordeal. He had a great realizing sense, all the while he was getting through with it, of how peculiarly gifted an actor must be to lose all consciousness of everything but the character he was portraying. Oh, to lose sight, as he had on the first occasion, of that disconcerting sea of expectant faces!

The actors, throwing all their force and enthusiasm into the balance, "played up" to him, fed his points, as Crowley had expressed it, encouraged and strengthened with the silent but potent will to carry him along in spite of himself. A tingling electric wave of fraternal feeling swept through and through, and filled his being, never to recede. As actor, manager—in any rôle—he understood the "*genus*" once and for all.



*"Take my advice. Tank up! You'll fool 'em yet!"*

Big Dan, the burly stage hand, watched proceedings from the flies, and was dismayed. He clearly sensed the difference in quality of the performance from those of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights of the previous week. And to-night was the supreme test!

Big Dan deposited a greenback in the grimy palm of an assistant, and whispered mysteriously:

"Here, Tim. You're off duty for the rest of the act. Cut it to the corner. And fetch the best, mind—the gilded best."

The dreaded third act was inevitably called. Harrison's brain was pounding, pounding, his pulses raced with his twitching nerves. A faint greenish hue spread over his visage. To face that mob again after the undoubted failure

of the first two acts, before the embarrassed pity of the "Rams," the "Monks," and the "Buskins"! Could he do it? He felt that he could not. A childish impulse to fly out of the stage door and never come back had almost formed in his aching head, when Big Dan approached with a note bearing the official stamp of the office.

Harrison opened it swiftly. He read:

The limit! What the h—— is the matter with you? Speed up! You're killing the performance. We're sold out eight weeks ahead. What do you think you're doing? WICKERSHAM.

Big Dan caught the fiery flash in the Little Manager's luminous eyes, and thought it the psychological instant to pull a gleaming bottle of Al golden rye out of his capacious hip pocket.

He proffered it.

"The best," he urged awkwardly, yet with a high pride. "The very best, sir. Take my advice. Tank up! You'll fool 'em yet!"

"Was it as bad as that?"

laughed Harrison. Then, noting the hurt in the big fellow's frank, ugly face, he took the generously offered gift and said cordially: "I'll have a drink with you later, Dan. Thank you. I find I don't need it now."

Nor did he need it. "Killing the performance, am I?" he raged to himself, clenching his fists and gritting his teeth. Anger at his own stupid self-consciousness, pride, defiance, and the future of his authority in the theater at stake, acted upon him as a far mightier ichor than the entire contents of Dan's bottle could ever have done.

He fairly rushed on to the fray, played—played like a madman, as if literally the result meant life—or, as he had toasted the event to his friends—death.

Such passionate energy, coupled with

his undoubted understanding of the character and his thoroughly regained poise, could not but triumph.

"It's a cinch—a walk-over!" breathed the old ticket man at his station in the back of the theater.

"It's more than that," agreed Wickersham, again standing next him, and taking in the uproarious applause of the people.

Harrison had reclaimed the play. Wickersham saw, with the true artist's intuition, that the "juvenile" held the center of interest. It had not been mere managerial tyranny on Harrison's part. He had been justified in his abominable interference. Wickersham knew now that he had lost, through vanity, the opportunity of creating the character in America. Harrison—Harrison—had reproduced it instead; a mere manager, had had a keener, truer insight than— It was a blow—straight between the eyes.

Harrison waved aside the cries for a speech, and finally sent the director in front to say that he would be glad to speak a few words at the end of the play to any who cared to remain.

It was a night of surprises, and the audience was charmed with the novelty of not knowing what to expect.

No one was more amazed than Wickersham when, at the final curtain, as Harrison stepped out to address the multitude, and the thunder of shouting and handclapping had ceased, the ushers, up to this time under his control, coolly march down the aisles, distributing souvenirs to the delighted patrons!

One was handed him. It was in the form of a leaflet, cunningly gotten up with the Little Manager's version of the story side by side with an imaginary version of his own, and with the Little Manager's portrait on the inside, and his own conspicuously evident on the outside.

It was Wickersham's turn to gasp, but he listened instead to the Little Manager's Napoleonic seizure of the enthusiastic moment to plant the flag of a fresh enterprise. Wickersham had another deep glimpse into the *modus operandi* of the genus manager.

"Friends," said the Little Manager simply, "I thank you for your tolerance. I am no actor—never was, and never could be. I have slid through to-night with the aid of the company, and the gentle reminder of the manager *pro tem* that you paid to see a play, and that I had to deliver your money's worth, no matter what it cost me! I played to demonstrate a point in acting, and my rival in the box office has managed to demonstrate conclusively—how easy it is to run a theater! I confess frankly that the prospect of slipping back into my old shoes to-morrow night—as you will find announced in the souvenir leaflet—can only be compared to the relief the public will probably feel—at my loss. This is no reflection, you understand, on Mr. Wickersham's managerial methods! As to that gentleman, you will have many opportunities to compare him with me—for he is destined to remain under my management for the next five years. We hope to establish a permanent stock company here. Through Wickersham, the actors of our organization will learn at first hand the trials and tribulations as well as the glories and rewards of a manager; through me—and to-night's—pardon me—martyrdom—my fellow gamblers in the wonderful game of the theater may learn some wholesome truths about the needs and requirements of the actor. Thus—through mutual understanding—do I hope to establish the Twentieth Century Theater!

"Ladies and gentlemen—I thank you."

The Little Manager rushed off to escape the riot of cheers and the stampede of friends to the front of the theater. There was much buzz and comment as the crowds filed out. Wickersham drank it all in, amazed at the impression of power the Little Manager had stamped upon the least of them.

"He's certainly taken the last trick," he admitted, throwing back his head in a long, half-hysterical laugh. "Fancy making an announcement like that before all the clubs and half the managers in New York. Actually holding me up on a five years' contract!"

Harrison was carefully removing his make-up when Wickersham arrived at his door. There was an awkward pause, broken by the young juvenile, who grinned as he coolly inquired:

"Did you get my note?"

"I did," said Harrison, with an attempt at austerity.

"It broke the spell, didn't it?" probed Wickersham. "I knew you only needed a little abuse to get you going!"

Harrison scrubbed at the rouge and powder, and heaved a contented sigh.

"Thank Heaven—that's the last of the grease paint for me. Never again! How can you stand it? I'm wild to get into my own togs."

Wickersham smiled his strange smile.

"I'm an actor, that's the answer. Acting is my life. Grease paint's part of it." Taking certain accounts from his pocket, he laid them in a neat pile on the make-up shelf. "There you are—and may I never see the like o' them again. How can you live with figures in your head from morning until night? I'm on my way to a madhouse."

"It's my life," retorted Harrison, with a wink, "almost."

The two looked at one another. Each rejected the other's work. Yet each had dispatched his temporary obligations with credit; each had proved that the order of brain that could make a first-rate manager or actor was of much the same order that makes the wheels of the world go around wherever it is destined to manifest itself.

"You'll play to-morrow night?" asked Harrison suddenly.

"You wait and see," was all Wickersham could force out with that lump in his throat, but the grip of the hand that followed somehow satisfied.

"How about that five years' contract our official press agent anticipated?" pursued the reinstated manager.

"It goes," said Wickersham heartily, and then added a bewildered question: "But what do you mean by the official—"

"You seem to have overlooked Grayson, our publicity man. I ordered him to lie low. I wanted to see if your dramatic-inventive ability could pull you

out of the scrape. Believe me—I found out. When I read those newspapers yesterday, after I had partially recovered from the shock, I got hold of Grayson, who is a whirlwind hustler, and had him rush out those souvenirs for to-night, and blazon forth dodgers in regard to your appearance to-morrow. Of course—there was the chance of your throwing us over—but—"

"But what?" Wickersham's voice was gruff with feeling.

"Marjorie Lowe—didn't think you would—throw—"

"Marjorie knows," said Wickersham. A howling battalion of "Rams," "Monks," and "Sock-and-buskins" cut in on them, pounding on the door, whistling, shouting, singing foolish improvised ditties, and finally crowding into the dressing room and pressing around outside. They succeeded in carrying off their confrère to a characteristic jubilee, but Wickersham declined their cordial invitation.

"He has a far more important appointment," said Harrison, with a meaning look, and "the boys" accepted the explanation, congratulated the erstwhile ruler, and departed.

"Good night!" sang out the Little Manager. "Good luck, old man!"

Wickersham understood, and bounded up the stairs to the ingénue's dressing room. "Ready, Marjorie?" he called.

Marjorie emerged.

"You know—I swore I'd never speak to you again. Have you forgotten?" she said severely, pulling out the fingers of her gloves.

"I please to forget—don't you?" There was a wealth of meaning in Wickersham's tone.

"I do!" said the girl, eyes brimming. The gloves dropped unheeded as she took both his hands. "Moreover—I'm proud to speak to you. You're twice the man I knew before!"

"Almost as much of a man as Bob Harrison?" he teased.

"Well, Bob Harrison is some man—isn't he, Ted?"

"He is," stated Wickersham emphatically, with his arms twined around his Big Pink Rose.

# The Obsolete Festivall



By  
*Nina Wilcox Putnam*

Author of "In Search of Arcady," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. HAYGARTH LEONARD

FOR several moments of tense, indoor silence, the wind howled among the pine trees. Then Mrs. DePuyster broke the fire-lit quiet of the wide room with her pretty laugh.

"Pat, dear boy, isn't this a marvelous improvement on the usual Christmas Eve celebration?" she asked her husband.

Peyton DePuyster nodded in languid emphasis, as he lit a new cigarette.

"You bet it is, old girl!" he replied. "What a blessing to escape all that silly rot about the boring holiday business. This was an inspiration, for a fact!"

He moved his hand in a lazy gesture, which, for all that it was so slight, seemed to comprehend the turbulent, snow-filled wood outside, no less than the crude luxury of the big living room, with its dim lamps, its solid, shining furniture, its rough, log walls, tapestry hung, and its gleaming floor, with unmounted skins upon it by way of rugs. It was an odd room, ambiguous in character, but typical of the modern idea of "roughing it," inasmuch as the rough part was mostly symbolic. But it was a pleasant apartment, and to-night it gave its occupants a feeling of being very far from their usual world.

Another short silence intervened before either spoke again, and, as their talk died down, so, for an instant, did the wind; in the interval came the sound of a boisterous, hoydenish laugh

from the direction of the servants' quarters. Mr. and Mrs. DePuyster glanced at each other from their seats at opposite sides of the blazing log fire.

"It's that wretched little Irish parlor maid," she apologized. "She does it all the time, and it seems impossible to escape the sound of it. I will get rid of her as soon as we go back. She was brought by mistake, but to send her off now—"

The wind arose again in a fierce, joyous yell, shaking even the heavy rafters of the camp, like a rapturous child playing with a Christmas toy. "Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted the wind, and flung a great mass of something soft against the northern windows. DePuyster arose, and, strolling over, pulled back the curtain. Against the glass was a great white flower of snow, with branches and leaves of frost.

"By Jove, what a night!" he exclaimed, returning to the hearth with a shiver. "We may be snowed in, Helen, and then you will begin to wish we had stayed in town and gone to the theater like ordinary folk."

"Amid all the schoolgirls, and college boys, and grandparents, and general sickening holiday crowd?" she retorted, laughing. "No, indeed!"

"Or gone to your mother's, to dine with Uncle Samuel, and all the poor relations," he continued teasingly.

"Oyster soup, turkey and ham



*"Pat, dear boy, isn't this a marvelous improvement on the usual Christmas Eve celebration!"*

carved on the table, plum pudding—ugh!" she replied, making a little moue. "All that is nasty enough, but there is worse—the deadly farce of pretending to rejoice over something no one believes in any more! The canting hypocrisy of it! The dullness, the ridiculous obligations, the unwelcome gifts!"

The man's shoulders moved a trifle uneasily.

"I agree it's a stupid, obsolete performance," he said, "and I'm thoroughly glad we bolted out of it, and simply ignored the whole business; but, speaking of gifts—you sent Rodger's boy the things, didn't you?"

"Tommy? Yes, indeed. I had them sent over to the Moston School," she answered carelessly.

Again the man shifted in his chair.

"Did you by chance select them yourself?" he asked, without looking at her.

Helen DePuyter sat upright with a languid motion, staring at him with a look that closely approached astonishment. With the motion, her perfect

dinner gown sheathed her like live silver.

"Why, Pat! Of course not!" she ex-postulated. "You wouldn't expect me to go into the crowded shops at such a season, would you? I simply sent a check for a hundred to Schwarz's, and wrote them to make a selection, to that amount, for a little boy of seven, and send the things to Thomas DePuyter, care of the Moston School."

"I suppose they'll know what he'd like," said the man.

"They ought to, it's their business," said the woman.

From the kitchen regions there came again that whole-hearted laugh, sand, with an impatient gesture, Helen closed the door into the hallway, muffling the sound. On her way back to her seat, she stopped behind her husband and put a hand lightly on his shoulder.

"Why, Pat, I believe you think I should have taken more trouble," she said. "Next thing I know, you'll be conscience-stricken because we haven't the boy here with us!"

"Perhaps we ought to have him, Helen," replied the husband. "I know Rodger and Grace used to—"

"Your brother Rodger was a stupid old domestic goose, and so was his wife, even if they were darlings," said she, still stooping over him. "I thought we had agreed that it was impossible for us to have a child in the house. Neither of us want it, dear, as we've said a hundred times. You are doing quite enough in sending the boy to Moston. There isn't a better school in the country."

"It's about eight miles from here, isn't it?" said DePuyster, apropos of nothing. She slipped her arm about his neck.

"Now, Pat, don't be an idiot!" she admonished him. "Think of the mess if we had a child here! A tree, and packages, and midday dinner, and all the silly nonsense we have taken so much pains to get away from. Besides, he's only seven. Just a baby, and won't miss it. Then, too, the Mostons are jolly people who know just how to handle a boy—it's their profession."

"I don't believe any of the children will be left—" he began.

"Then he'll have all the more attention!" she cried. "Honestly, dear, how would you like to see this room all littered and disarranged, and our reading of Shaw's new play interrupted?"

"I'm not getting sentimental," he disclaimed, "and I would be sorry to drag in any such bosh. A safe and sane Christmas is as important as a safe and sane Fourth of July! Let's read that second act, and forget such archaic things as sentiments."

"That's better!" she approved, giving him the book.

"Where were we?" he began. "Ah, yes! Act Second, Scene First, a living room—— Jove! What was that?"

A door had slammed heavily, and there was a sound of voices, whirled into the teeth of the gale, and indistinguishable save that they were masculine.

"It cannot be visitors, for no one knows we are here," said Helen. "Besides, it's after ten."

"Nor travelers," said Pat. "It's too far off the road."

Just then the door was opened, and the rosy face of the little Irish parlor maid was thrust in through the crack.

"Sure, an' it's two gents wantin' shelter, an' they lost intirely, travelin' the long road," she said.

"May I speak to Mr. DePuyster?" asked a splendid voice behind her.

"Open the door, Kathleen!" commanded Helen.

The hoyden obeyed, her cap askew, her eyes round with interest, a broad grin of welcome fixed on her coarse features. Past her came two elderly men in greatcoats of fur. The first, a florid man of sixty-odd, with a gold pince-nez and trimly set mustache of white, pulled off his gloves as he advanced, and held out his hand.

"Mr. Culliver!" exclaimed Mrs. DePuyster. "How do you do! How on earth do you come here in such weather?"

"I must apologize for such an abrupt, unheralded appearance!" exclaimed the newcomer, shaking hands with both DePuysters. "Bitt our stupid man met us at the train with a motor, of all things! And, as a natural sequence, we were stalled after half a mile. We tried to walk back to the station for a sleigh, got lost in the dark and snow, and, after about an hour, stumbled upon your place. Allow me to present the second uninvited guest, my old friend, Professor Fawcett, who came up to spend Christmas with us at Lenox."

"You will be prejudiced against the Berkshires by this rude weather, I'm afraid, Professor Fawcett," said Helen. "But you both must have something to eat and drink at once. I'm afraid you must be frozen!"

"Pretty nearly!" responded Professor Fawcett cheerfully, drawing up to the fire and spreading his hands to the blaze. "Pretty nearly—but not quite! I, for one, don't mind the cold at this season."

He was a magnificent old man, hardy as an ancient oak. His beard was white and flowing, and his eyes, behind their round, tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles, keen and piercing. Two more splendid types than the old friends could not

well be imagined. Culliver, with his well-rounded figure, was typical, in the best sense, of worldly success, and looked, every inch of him, the powerful magnate that he was. Fawcett, on the other hand, was as perfectly the renowned scientist.

DePuyster watched their eager, curiously boyish expressions closely, when, a little later, he helped the manservant set before them the supper that had been brought in. What magic had touched their faces so, with the very spirit of youth? What gave them such buoyancy, such verve, and such a look of simple delight? Both were old men, and yet one would think that their accident had been the veriest lark. Indeed, returning to Helen's opening remark, the banker entered a protest.

"No, you needn't be afraid of Fawcett being prejudiced against our Berkshires!" declared Mr. Culliver, glass in one hand and sandwich in the other. "He's come up with me always, at Christmas."

"Is your Lenox place open, then?" inquired Helen.

"We never fail to open it for the holidays," replied Culliver, "and my two daughters come up and bring their husbands and children. Then Gus—my boy, you know—got married last year, and this Christmas there's a new baby; the only boy of the lot! Old idiot that I am, I can scarcely wait to see him! And Fawcett's nephew comes and brings his kid—don't he, old boy? And we have the rippin'est time imaginable. Let me tell you, it makes me young again, that's what it does!"

"We had a fine tree last year," added Professor Fawcett, "but this year, it is to be the great big one from the cedar lot. Why!" he exclaimed, in sudden dismay, "they must be trimming it now!"

"That's so, confound it!" cried Culliver. And for an instant the two old gentlemen sat looking at each other in blank disappointment. Then the banker laughed apologetically.

"You must excuse us, Mrs. DePuyster," he said. "But you know what fun it is to trim a tree, with the door

locked on the kiddies, all secret like; and to play with the toys yourself a bit before your daughter ties 'em up in that nice white paper and red ribbons; and what sport it is to decorate the rooms with holly—with holly—ah, hum!" He paused a bit confusedly, looking about him. "Where are all your decorations, dear lady?"

And in truth there were none—not even a sprig of green, by Helen's express orders. Deprecating what she plainly considered a superiority, she explained.

"We don't go in for Christmas," she said, with a smile. "To tell the truth, we don't believe in it. You see, we're not church people, so even that side doesn't appeal to us."

"And the atmosphere of the celebration has become so perverted," put in DePuyster. "I don't mean, of course, but that it's perfectly possible, still, for some few people to enjoy it wholesomely, as you do, Mr. Culliver. But, for my own part, I must confess that I find it mostly sentimentality, especially, as my wife says, if one finds no real religious significance in it."

"Ah—hum! Well, you are both very young!" regarded Culliver, the corner of his eyes twinkling. "When you're an old fellow like me, you'll know better."

"Perhaps," said DePuyster. "But when there is no significance in the act of giving—"

"No significance in the act of giving!" shouted Professor Fawcett. "Boy, you don't know what you're talking about. Why, I'm going to give away my greatest treasure, and the pleasure of it—wait! Let me show you!"

The professor's enthusiasm was so intense that it proved contagious, and they watched him breathlessly, as he got up and delved in the pocket of his greatcoat. With careful hands he unearthed a small packet, and, taking it to the lamp, beckoned them to follow. Then, as they gathered about and watched, he unfolded the white wrappings with exquisite gentleness, until there lay upon the table the very essence of summer, captive here in the



*Past her came two elderly men in greatcoats of fur.*

heart of the snowbound forest—a crystal-mounted butterfly, of such rare beauty that the jewels on Helen's breast blinked for shame at the comparison.

"It is a *Thecla Halesus*, and very rare," said the professor. "The most beautiful of any collection, and I am going to give it to Bobby, my great-nephew, for his Christmas present."

"Going to give it to a boy!" objected Helen. "Won't he merely destroy it?"

"My Bobby? Never!" exclaimed Fawcett. "Why, the boy *cares* for the creatures. I believe he cares more than I do. That is my pride and my delight—the greatest reason for my continued ambition. He shall carry on my work."

There was a short silence, broken by Mr. Culliver.

"Since Fawcett insists on showing off," said he, "I am tempted to follow his example and display what I have for my grandson."

"Oh! Do!" said Mrs. DePuyster, and her husband murmured an assent.

"It's nothing so fine and rare," remarked the banker, fumbling in his pocket. "But it's more in my line. Fawcett wants to make his grandson a naturalist, and so gives him a butterfly. Well, I want my grandson to be a banker, so I thought I'd give him these."

Here he took out a little bag, very cleverly designed in soft leather, and,

opening the strings, displayed a heap of gold pieces, all new and glittering.

"Quite an idea, eh?" he commented. "They are the twenties by St. Johns, the great sculptor—the ones of which the mold was broken. They are so beautiful, and there will never be any more of them! I had great trouble in getting these, but they're nearly a hundred."

"They *are* exquisite!" said Helen, picking up one, and examining the lovely sculptured face upon it. "What a charming gift!"

She returned it then, and Culliver, closing the bag, played with it as he talked. Professor Fawcett had not covered the butterfly again, but sat with it in his hand, so that he could look at it occasionally. Then once more the fierce breath of the night drove silence in upon them, and for several moments they listened to the roisterings of the wind. Presently a faint sound, as of some one knocking, was heard.

"Perhaps you had better go, Pat," said Helen. "I don't think the servants can hear."

"Wait a moment!" said DePuyster. "It can't be any one knocking. Why, it's nearly twelve. We must have been mistaken."

They all listened intently, sitting immovable, and the knock was repeated, quite unmistakably this time.

"Let me go!" exclaimed Culliver, and before his host could forestall him, he reached the door. In an instant there came to those waiting at the hearth his cry of surprise, and a call for assistance. DePuyster and the professor sprang to his aid, and, in another moment, all three were half carrying, half dragging, the figure of an old man toward the hearth.

"Some brandy, quick!" exclaimed Culliver, bracing the newcomer upon pillows, and rolling him as near to the blaze as was safe.

"Is he frozen?" said Helen. "Oh, the poor old fellow!"

"Here you are!" said DePuyster, pouring out a stiff drink, and handing it to the banker. The latter took it, and, after a little difficulty, succeeded in

forcing the man on the hearthrug to drink it. Then they all stood around and watched him, as he slowly recovered himself.

The third of the DePuysters' unexpected guests might have been a subject for Rembrandt, so wonderfully was his clean-shaven face threaded with lines, so marvelously wrinkled were his withered hands, so misted with age were his eyes. His close-cropped hair was white, and all the bones of his face were highly articulated, like those of a Hebrew patriarch. One instantly felt that he had been cheated of the flowing beard that should have completed the picture. His clothes were poor, but warm and sound, and he appeared to possess that toughness which belongs only to the real countryman. As he raised himself upon the rug, his first conscious action was to press his right hand upon his breast, as if to assure himself that something hidden there was still safe. And then, satisfied that it was, he turned to the solicitous group about him.

"Praise be to God!" he said solemnly, "and thankee kindly, all."

"How did you come to be abroad on such a night?" asked Culliver. "And how did you find your way here?"

"I follered the star," said the old man. "The superintendent down to the poorhouse sent me to find the man an' the woman an' bring 'em back. But I ain't seen 'em; only the light."

There was a curious stillness in the room for a moment, as if something from another world had penetrated there; and this atmosphere did not depart when Fawcett spoke, but grew in intensity during the scene that followed.

"What man and woman was it for whom you were searching?" asked the professor.

"Why!" replied the ancient man. "The man with the sick woman, o' course! They was down to the poorhouse this evening, asking to be taken in; but the superintendent, he turned 'em off. Then he got sorry, an' sent me after, to bring 'em back. She was with a child, you know. But I got lost, an' then I seen the star."

"What star? It's a stormy night. Is the man mad?" said Helen, hardly above a whisper. There was a strange look about this ancient person, with his toothless mouth and his uncanny mummbling.

The old man had got to his feet, and stood clutching at his bosom, as when he had first revived. Culliver gently forced him into a comfortable seat.

"Who are you?" asked he. "Tell us what your name is."

"My name? Old Joe!" said the man. "I had another once, but I fergit it. I had lots o' things once. Things, an' things, an' things! But they're all gone, an' I can't clearly recollect even just exactly what they was. But I hed 'em!"

"And do you belong in the poor-house?" asked DePuyster.

"Yea, I live there," said Old Joe. "I bin there—I bin there—I can't just recollect how long. I'm kind o' old. But I'm strong in the legs yet, an' so the superintendent, he sent me out to find the man an' the woman——"

"Yes, yes, we know!" interrupted Culliver. "Poor fellow, I suppose he was well off once!" he added, aside to DePuyster.

Old Joe caught the last of this.

"Aye!" said he. "I hed a fine long beard once! But the superintendent tuk it off. Once I hed lots o' things—an' now, nothin'! Leastways, they thinks so," he added, a look of extreme cunning spreading over his face. "Aye, they thinks so. They thinks I ain't got nothin' left, but I've fooled 'em! Oh, I've fooled 'em!"

Unconsciously, his hand went to his bosom again, and his weak eyes searched the group of faces about him eagerly.

"I'll show yer!" he said suddenly.

With a swift movement, he reached inside his shirt and brought forth a little wooden crucifix—a broken, battered thing with the figure missing, and the silver trimmings bent and tarnished. A murmur broke from the lips of the watchers as he held it aloft.

"P'rhaps yer don't think it's no good," he whispered. "That's 'cause yer owns things. I picked it up on the

road last spring, I did. An' I hid it in my bosom. An' I've carried it ever since. It's valuable, 'cause it's *mine*. *I owns it*. An' the superintendent don't know I got it. It's dearer than my life 'cause it b'longs ter me, an' my life is God's."

He looked about him with a vacant smile, and then, pulling himself together, went on as if suddenly recollecting what he had come for.

"The superintendent, he sent me out to find the man an' the woman," he said, "but I didn't see 'em, so I foltered the star."

"Nonsense!" said Pat shortly. "There is a fierce blizzard raging, as you well know. How could there be stars out on such a night?"

"There was a *star!*" insisted the old man. "It bring me here. It stopped still when I got here. I caught up to it. Praised be the Lord!"

Again that uncomfortable silence, with a sense on all of them as of something pending, they knew not what.

"Where was the star when you came in?" asked Helen unexpectedly.

"Right over your barn!" said the old man.

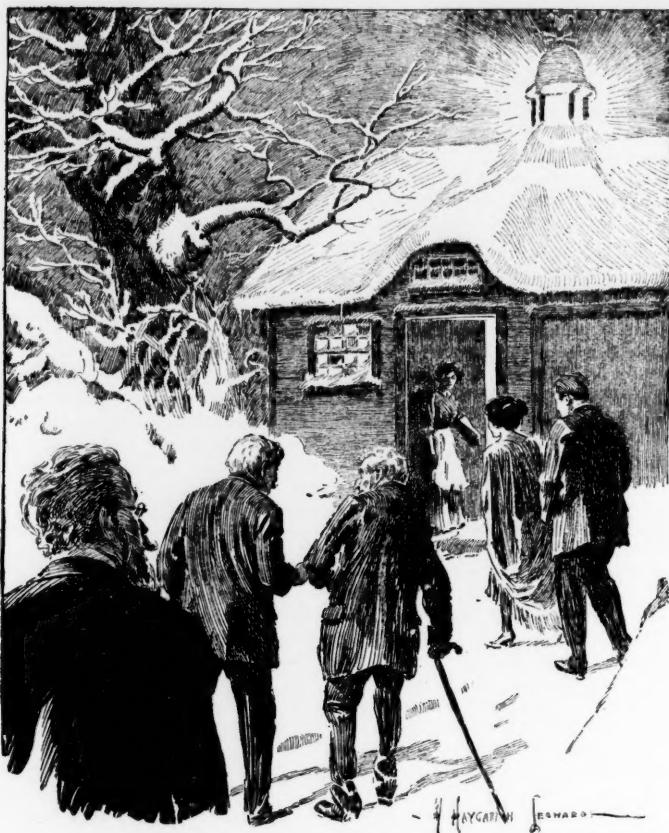
"Don't heed him, he is evidently a little mad," said DePuyster. "Don't trouble about him, Helen! You look so white!"

"Right over the barn!" she exclaimed. "Why, Pat, he means the roof light! The servants must have lighted it!"

"The roof lantern! By Jove! That's what the old fellow means, of course!" replied her husband. "And a jolly good thing they happened to light it, too!"

"We have a great lamp in a cupola on the barn roof," Helen explained. "And in summer, when we have evening parties, it is lighted to guide the guests' carriages. We can see it from this window. Let us look!"

Crossing to a north casement, she raised the curtain, and, sure enough, there was the lamp, a glowing star in the sky above the black shape of the stable, the snowflakes doing a madcap dance about it, and hurling themselves against the glass like millions of white moths.



*With infinite caution, she opened the stable door, the others still following.*

"There!" shrilled Old Joe. "I tol yer, I tol yer!"

Helen dropped the curtain.

"I see! That explains the mystery!" said Fawcett.

"No!" cried the old man from the poorhouse. "It's a sign! I tell yer, it's a sign, this holy night!"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth, when the door of the hall was flung wide, disclosing the disheveled figure of Kathleen. Her cap was gone, her dress disordered, and she was evidently laboring under the stress of some tremendous excitement.

"Quick! What is the matter?" commented Helen. "Speak, can't you! What is the trouble?"

"Glory be to God, it's a boy, ma'am!" shouted Kathleen. "Cook tried to prevent me, but I thought ye'd be glad to know, an' herself needin' another blanket—"

"A boy! Where?" said DePuyter sharply. "Do you mean outside?"

"No, sir; that is, yes, in the barn, sir!" gasped Kathleen.

"Well, bring him in!" thundered the master. "Why don't you bring him in?"

"Bring him in, is it, an' he just after enterin' the world at all!" cried Kathleen, clasping her hands wildly. "Sure, master, dear, it can't be done!"

"What in Heaven's name are you talking about?" demanded Helen. "Collect your senses, girl. What do you mean?"

"Sure, it's the man an' the woman," began the maid. "They was turned away, even from the poorhouse, ma'am, an' me, an' cook, an' Thompkins, ma'am, we thought no harm to let them go in the stable unbeknownst like, nor to give them sup an' bite, the way they were so weary travelin' the world an' no place to lay their heads. Sure, ma'am, ye'll not scold us, but she's had a wee gossoon, the like of which ye never saw for the beauty of a new baby. An' cook says another blanket is needed, an' I say ye should know, the way ye'll be aware of the good you're doin' this blessed night!"

When the little colleen had come to the end of her long speech, and stood breathless, those who had heard it gazed at each other in wonderment. Then Culliver spoke.

"Do you really mean, then, that there is a strange man and woman in the stable, and that the woman has given birth to a child?" he asked solemnly.

"I do, indeed, bless the little heart of him, and he so cunnin'!" exclaimed Kathleen. "Will ye not come out a minute an' see the little feller?"

"I think, perhaps, we had better go and find out what it all means, Pat," said Helen. "Give me my cloak. There! The rest come with me, please."

Holding her rich garment about her closely, she motioned the little maid to lead the way; and in a silent procession they passed through the dark dining room and pantry, and thence into the brightly lighted kitchen, which had been hung with greenery, till now it more resembled a ballroom deserted in its gala array. Over its shining floor tripped Kathleen, eager and excited, and, with strange emotions in their hearts, her superiors followed humbly.

The storm had abated somewhat, and

the wind had died down; so that, when the back door was flung open, there was only a calm stretch of snow for them to cross. This had already been trampled solid by frequent passengers between the kitchen and the stable. Kathleen started across without hesitation, as one who treads a familiar path. With infinite caution, she opened the stable door, the others still following.

Like candles on an altar stood three wax lights in a row upon an overturned box, and the flickering light threw great shadows on the raftered ceiling, which was dim with mystery. There was a sweet scent of hay in the place, and the warm breath of beasts. In their stalls, the horses stamped nervously, and the cows swayed and blew upon their full mangers, knowing that something which they understood was afoot. Here and there the light struck a gleam from some polished surface of wood or brass, illuminating the rough faces of the huddled group of servants by the door. But for the most part, the three little tongues of flame served only to accentuate the surrounding darkness, which seemed to palpitate as if it held the whole secret of Love, and Life, and Death. Slowly, the eyes of the rich woman, who was so poor, searched the gloom, as if for courage to look at what lay beyond the flame of those three candles, wrapped in their shimmering, tender light. With an effort, she turned her gaze upon the form that lay so still; then, with a little gasp, she knelt beside the poor mattress, and, taking the thin hand upon the cover in her own, kissed it. The woman turned her head a little, and her pale face awoke into sudden glory. In his mother's arms the child stirred and cried, and Helen uncovered its face so that all might see. The men drew near, and they, too, knelt, the better to behold the miracle.

With an inarticulate movement of her lips, the mother smiled into Helen's eyes for a long moment, and something electric flashing between them made them in that instant to be as one woman, yet as all women.

But such understanding is too poignant to endure, and so the mother closed her eyes, turning her head away wearily. For a little longer, Helen remained kneeling, swift fingers busy with the bosom of her gown. Then she laid something that glittered upon the blanket, and arose unsteadily. Beside the jewel, the professor laid his jewel—the gorgeous butterfly, and, shame-facedly, Culliver followed with his little bag of gold. Last of all came Old Joe, who, getting up from his knees painfully, laid his crucifix at the baby's feet.

"Now it all belongs to God!" he muttered, as he joined the others at the doorway. There a ragged man, with curious gold rings in his ears, emerged from the shadow where he had been quietly watching in company with the servants.

"*Jal Duvelskoe!*" said he, with upraised hand. "All good to this dwelling!"

"He means the peace of some heathen god upon ye," said Kathleen.

And they all returned to the house. For hours Helen paced the floor,

silent, anguished, and her husband sat and watched, helpless, because he, too, understood. Then, when the daylight came, she muffled herself in her furs and stood waiting in the hall for DePuyster to come around with the sleigh. It was a brilliant day, full of golden sun and silver-tipped snow. Culliver and Professor Fawcett, hurrying out of the breakfast room at sound of the approaching sleigh bells, stared in surprise at the sight of her.

"Why, my dear lady! Up so early!" exclaimed Culliver.

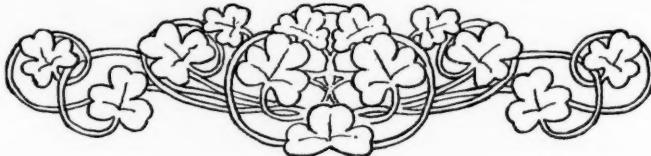
Professor Fawcett beamed as he fastened up his greatcoat.

"Mrs. DePuyster!" he cried. "Surely you did not trouble to get up just to see us off?"

"No," said Helen, "it's not altogether for that. Pat and I are driving over to Moston School to get our little nephew. It's Christmas Day, you know."

"Bringing him home for the holiday, I suppose!" said Mr. Culliver genially.

"More than that," said Helen. "He's just a baby. We're bringing him home for good!"



### Man and Marriage

THIS is the story as it is told over the teacups or amid the ballroom turmoil by Mrs. Joseph F. Johnston, wife of the senator from Alabama:

"The senator is very fond of gardening, and at our home in Alabama he spends all his leisure time dressed in his oldest clothes and working on the grounds. One day a friend of mine came to our house when I was out, and, seeing the senator pulling weeds, inquired:

"'My good man, when will Mrs. Johnston be back?'

"He said he did not know, and she stood a few moments and watched him work. Then she asked him if he would work for her, and promised him more than Mrs. Johnston was giving him.

"'I'd like to get that job,' said the senator, 'but I have a life contract with Mrs. Johnston.'

"'Why, that's peonage!'" shrieked my friend.

"'Well,' said the gardening senator, with a dry grin, 'some may call it that, but others call it marriage.'"

## The New Year Resolution

By Edwin L. Sabin

**H**AIL, Mr. New Year Resolution! *Ave—atque vale;* or, in words of more modern date, welcome—and farewell! Also, better luck next time. You have come in like a lion, and will go out like a lamb. At any rate, so the humorists are accustomed to assume; and in many a jest lies earnest.

The New Year's resolution is the one New Year custom which, I dare say, persists. The New Year's call, that vogue so delightful in its inception by hospitality and courtesy, but so farcical in its amplification by our American desire for a record in calls as in speed, has, I understand, passed on to join the innumerable caravan of bell hats, crinolines, and stocks, and manners that never would permit a man in a public conveyance to sit while a woman stood. But the New Year's resolution is human nature unchangeable.

How sweet is it to wait until New Year's before we take a full grip on Mr. Habit! We may dally along with him, feeling him out, you know, as wrestlers in the ring grab at one another's hands, squeeze a little, haul a little, and figuratively make faces, testing each his opponent. Mr. Habit is crafty; he seems to weaken under the tentative grueling, and you think, emboldened: "I'll haul him around a bit more. I'm wearing him down. And when I'm ready to tackle him he'll go in a heap. Huh! This is easy!" And Mr. Habit smiles in his sleeve—only, wrestlers do not wear sleeves, I believe—and knows the future, and is unafraid.

All this preliminary exercise but lends him strength; it helps him and amuses you; and by January 1st he is at his best. Then do you and he go to the mat together—I believe that this is the term; you get behind him—if this also is correct phraseology—and apply a sudden stern half nelson or full nelson, or whatever is quick and complete, and pin him right there. Hooray! There is Mr. Habit—there is the archenemy, Mr. Habit, relegated to the has-beens!

Loudly applaud the boxes and the dress circle of mother and wife and aunt and other interested spectators.

"You're out!" they decree to Mr. Habit. "You're it!" they praise to you.

The gallery of your friends cheer: "Good lad!" if you are a man, or: "Congratulations, dear!" if you are a woman. And together: "Our hopes—and fears—are all with you."

Mr. Habit humbly arises, pretends to dust his back and to admit the inevitable, and withdraws to the companionship of other habits, similarly banished upon this fateful day. In their temporary retreat—a port of Spain for deposed dignitaries—they hobnob and compare notes, and await the recall.

Humorists would have the world accept that the New Year Resolution against the Bad Habit, or in favor of the Good Habit, shows symptoms of a decline about January 10th, is up and down until about January 20th, takes to its bed about January 21st, lingers a week or so, and about February 1st expires. By February 2d the embargo against Bad Habit, or for Good Habit, has entirely been lifted, and the old régime is in force. And that is the stock joke, which never fails to bring from one to two dollars.

The trouble is, as seems to me, that we tackle the biggest job first. If we smoke, we quit smoking; if we drink, we quit drinking; if we cuss, we quit cussing—out into the air. If we—but apparently I have covered the bad habits usually attributed to man. They are the ones usually attributed, because they are the big bad habits, so alleged; and if I here would seem to be ignorant of the bad habits of woman, it is not because of gallantry nor real ignorance; it is because the bad habits of the better sex, perhaps, are the lesser bad habits, which are the worst of all. And these lesser bad habits, like the lesser good habits, are what we ought to tackle.

The average man New Year's "resolutioner"—and the average woman, too, I suspect—is apt to quit the bad habit for the effect that it has upon himself—or herself. The smoker quits smoking because it hurts him; the drinker quits drinking because it hurts him; the swearer quits swearing because it hurts him. And the feeling of righteousness wells and swells.

Brother Pilgrim, and Sister Pilgrim, let us consider

this top-heavy, selfish structure which we valorously upraise only so frequently to have it tumble.

Now, take that one popular and thus-stigmatized vice—smoking. My heart yearns when it dwells upon the troubled State of Domesticity when, by New Year resolution, the joint ruler “quits” smoking. Everybody within the kingdom is made subservient to his whim of the season, and everybody is in the same degree made miserable. Now, no doubt he, like you and I, Brother Pilgrims, was as addicted to half a dozen other vices just as dear, more disagreeable to others, and almost as detrimental to himself. It is natural that in selecting a Bad Habit we tackle a vice, and one which affects us physically; but this New Year why not make the experiment of letting the big, pet vice alone, and of squelching some apparently lesser habit, which is, nevertheless, a vice about as large.

There's Old Man Work. Old Man Work daily comes home with husband and “papa” from the office or the factory, bestows upon the fearful household a weary frown, a grunt, a complaint, and finally proffers them the reverse side of the evening paper. Husband and “papa”—this is an old-fashioned word to which, somehow, I am attached—will heroically quit smoking—especially after the doctor has suggested that it may be hurting his stomach or his heart; husband and “papa” will heroically, I say, banish Lady Nicotine, but he will persist in dragging about Old Man Work, and upon the household inflict that wet-blanket presence. Yes, to grunt shortly, to be irritable, to be “boss” at home as in the office, and more careless of other persons' feelings—that is a very dear habit, far too dear to suffer banishment by New Year resolution. We prefer to tackle a signal vice that hurts *us*, and that appears to bring virtuous reward of wider praise.

Gentleness! Supposing that each smoker, then, for that standard resolution against smoking—or drinking—substituted a resolution against irritability and brusqueness and busyness. What a difference that would make, not only in several million homes, but outside of them, too! Gentleness covers forbearance, charity, politeness, affability, and all to which home and fellow citizens are

entitled. There would have to be a compromise with Old Man Work, and with tobacco and drink. Work, of course, is necessary to man and woman, and tobacco and drink are not necessary; the stock-in-trade New Year resolution against the twain latter might still remain upon the statutes; but a resolution maker should consider his conscience as well as his heart and stomach, and his relations to others as well as his relations to himself.

Gentleness! All the world loves a gentleman and a gentlewoman. It is hard to credit that, after the example of the noble men and women upon the *Titanic*—oh, so long ago!—either sex can fail to pay instant, instinctive homage to the other. Remembering those gallant men who stepped aside and bade the women pass; remembering those women, equally as brave in the going or in the staying; remembering the exchange of homage, it scarcely seems possible that a New Year resolution is required to make every American man, during 1913, give his seat to a woman in a car, and to make every woman say with a smile: “Thank you.” Nevertheless, that is a big resolution—more difficult to adhere to, with some of us, than is the resolution upon smoking, or drinking, or idleness, or extravagance, or scandalous—no, not really scandalous, just casually pertinent and impertinent—gossip.

However, far be it from human me to category the frailties of other humans, or to pose as mentor or confessor. In this there is peril; a fellow is liable to expose his own secret sins, or else assume for others sins that are not sins at all. So many persons, so many vices; as, for instance, coffee is a vice to some, to some a boon. But sin, vice, habit, call it what you will, that trait upon which, at New Year’s, we focus our annual resolution, let us for the one year pay less attention to the spectacular and more to the intrinsic. Tobacco we men may regulate for our own good; that is only common sense. Economy, diet, idleness, you woman—and, bless you, I merely select these nouns haphazard, as dummy volumes are used to set off a bookshelf at the store—may regulate for your own good. But do not let us pass by, in our haste to accomplish a big thing all at once, vices and virtues which, as habits, affect not especially our own person, but rather the circle of persons around about us.



# Against the Wall

By Marion Hill

Author of "Georgette," "Theology," "Philanthropy," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. BUNKER

## A TWO-PART STORY—PART II.

In the first part of this story, which appeared in the December number, Stephen Holcomb, a young osteopathic physician, promises his rich father on his deathbed, that he will marry Evelyn Quimby. In due course of time Stephen proposes, but is rejected with scorn by Evelyn. In conscientious memory of his promise to his father, Stephen begs her to wait a month and give him a final answer then. She consents. At the end of the month, to Stephen's horror and dismay, she accepts him. They are married, and go to New York to live. Stephen devotes himself to his profession and entirely neglects his wife. Evelyn, on her side, gradually falls in love with Stephen, but without his suspecting it. Evelyn makes friends in New York, among them a young man, Jack Manning, who pays her a great deal of attention and whom she likes. Among other acquaintances is Jim Seely, a wealthy bachelor, who buys a moving-picture plant as his latest diversion. He is deeply in love with Camilla Thalberg, a haughty beauty of noble birth, who repulses him.

STEPHEN utilized the Christmas and New Year's holiday to send his wife to her mother's, while he went on a trip to Chicago.

The tendency of holy Christmas to soften hardened hearts is the effect which is oftenest held up to the public eye; but it has an equal potency in the other direction, and can lead some good-hearted people into well-nigh criminal capers.

Mrs. Quimby was so busy inflicting disasters of Yuletide on herself, her husband, her friends, and her maid-servant, that she fortunately lacked time to investigate the private affairs of her daughter; consequently, Evelyn got back to New York in January with her married life mercifully nonvivisected. Had she once gotten under the maternal knife, it would never have stopped cutting till her death spot had been located and bared.

"I hope you've had a bully time," was Stephen's ritual of installation when she came back. "I know I have."

It seemed to have given him but added work to do, for she saw less of him than ever.

And she saw more of another.

"Evelyn, I've missed you horribly," said Manning, coming to see her as soon as he heard of her return.

He had braved biting bad weather to make his call, and as he spoke flung his furred coat from him as vehemently as if it were still another barrier between them, and he could not get it away fast enough or far enough.

The gray afternoon brightened for her from the moment that he grasped both her hands in welcome.

"I think I've missed you, too," she conceded, weighing it out slowly.

"Only 'think'!" came from him in swift accusation.

The two words were so charged with meaning that she shrank away from them.

"Don't," she begged. "You mustn't."

Yet not for the life of her could she have explained her own plea.

"Oh, the game is yours," he said incoherently. "You see *that* plainly. Consequently, you invent the rules, and I can only follow them."

He let her hands fall from his grasp, and walked moodily up and down the

room, while she silently surveyed him, with emotions of amused excitement, which she fairly *dared* not analyze or name.

"Sit down and tell me the news," she said at last, when it should have been: "I like you, but you must go."

He responded at once to the commonplace in her tone, and was his usual impudent, impervious self as he lounged into the indicated chair.

"The latest?" he hazarded. "Seely's got us booked for a private reel of films. Fun's the true object; but the published one is charity. The reel is to be exhibited in high society during Lent, five dollars a ticket, the money to go to the church. But that's too far off to bother about."

"I'm not in the play!"

"Yes, you are; I saw to that."

"I can't act."

"No more can any of us. That's to be the unique charm of the film."

"Who else is in it?"

"Alma, of course. You, I. Donald Taggart. Do you know Donald Taggart?"

He asked this rather dryly.

"No."

"You have heard of him?" more dryly still.

"No."

"That's strange. He's Alma's Number One. And if report be true, he's skirmishing for Third."

"Why, is she still friends with him—her *husband*?"

"Ex. Oh, yes. She says a husband is like a good reputation; you have to lose it to prize it."

"I wish I could talk brightly, as she does."

"Evelyn, I'd sooner listen to you for five minutes than to Alma Somers for a lifetime."

"I never say anything."

"Perhaps not in words."

"Then how?"

"I hardly know; but as I sit before you now and look and listen, hundreds of unsaid things sing a sort of song to me. I can almost see your thoughts. They wrap you around in a visible cloud. They flash at me from under

your lowered eyelashes. They shine from your hair. What's that thing of Tennyson's? They 'glitter like a swarm of fireflies tangled in a silver braid.' You are charged with hidden forces like a storage battery."

"You are the only one who has discovered it."

"That may be sarcasm. Or you may mean prodigal kindness. I never can tell. Half the time I want to put my hands around your small neck and throttle you; half the time I want to hold you in my arms."

"Are you trying to talk unconventionally?"

"Are we still at the point where convention must rule us?"

"Why not?"

"The shuttle that you are: first forward, then *back!* The more intricate the pattern, the more you joy in it."

"I can't tell what you mean."

"I do not want you to tell; I am content to have you know."

"Then you are content with nothing; for I know nothing."

"I'm content with nothing? You will change your mind about that."

"When are we to be at Mr. Seely's studio?"

He laughed constrainedly.

"What a masterly switch of topics! But, before we entirely leave the other, tell me this: are you naïve, or are you subtle?"

"I am only myself."

"I believe you're right," he pondered, half puzzled. "It must feel pleasant to be one's self!"

"What are you?"

"When good-tempered, what my friends want me to be; when bad-tempered, what they don't want me to be."

"Use that as a theme, and play it on the piano for me."

He smiled whimsically and went immediately to the instrument.

It made her heart jump into her throat to have a man obey her. In her mind, a closed door seemed to swing open, disclosing to her view a new field of possibly instructive, certainly entertaining experiments.

Since it was no less new to him than to them, Jim Seely enjoyed the circus at his recently acquired "studio" quite as much as did his amateur company.

The place was an interesting series of swept but dusty floors, one above the other, each containing a room of special mystery, all of them redolent with smells of pepsin and fresh paint, and permeated from top to bottom by the activities of serious-faced men in shirt sleeves. At midday, or thereabouts, the odor of coffee, bread and butter, and carriage varnish floated around to intimate that the actors were getting fed. Seely and his invited friends accidentally gazed in upon a feeding troupe. Indians, fiercely tattooed for war, swapped sandwiches and anecdotes with murdered settlers. A bashful little Puritan maid said "Shut up, you rummy!" to William Penn. William Penn choked on a wedge of ham and swore his benignant wig half off his head. The stoical Indian braves leaned on their guns and giggled themselves silly.

"This is very well for a lark, but who'd do it for a living?" marveled Seely's "leading lady," haughty Miss Ritter, when they moved onward.

"You or I, if we got hungry enough," bluntly answered Jim Seely.

Then he doubtless remembered the girl who was hungry enough, but still wouldn't; for his face took on the look which Evelyn uncomfortably throbbed under, the look of living love that had no reason to hide itself.

The way that he engineered proceedings was remarkable for its unhesitating accuracy. If he had been stage director for screen productions all his life, he could not have acquired in it more capability than that which the first moment furnished him.

"Devilish shrewd beggar," mused Donald Taggart, settling his eyeglass after catching an armful of costumes just thrown to him.

Taggart was a middle-aged Englishman, who turned out to own a surprising faculty for doing well any number of things for which he was totally unfitted. By parting his hair in the mid-

dle and plastering it to his head he was enabled to hide his bald places, and quite gained in appearance by the maneuver, always slickly looking as if he had just emerged from a swim.

"He seems a decent person—to divorce," criticized Evelyn to Manning, who was at her side. And when was he not?

"I think that was the count she brought against him," remembered Manning.

"They're such hell to live with," murmured Alma herself, who had been nearer than imagined. She was in garb of a nun and fingered a rosary.

"How dear you look!" was Evelyn's sincere tribute.

"Religious things make me want to say 'damn,' there's so much of it in the Bible," murmured Miss Somers pensively. "Jim, didn't you mix me and Evelyn up when you gave out these characters?"

Evelyn was in the dress of a Spanish dancer.

"No," said Seely, tutoring his performers. "Mrs. Holcomb's brown hair and blue eyes will take black as night. And the part calls for the very expression which is oftenest on her face."

"And what's that?" inquired Manning scholastically.

"A sort of a hint that she's not as tame as she looks. And you, Miss Somers, can laugh away everybody's sadness but your own. So I've given you misery to burn."

"Thanks, Jim."

"Shrewd beggar," Donald Taggart iterated, settling his eyeglass more firmly still. "And what will this musty smellin' toggery turn *me* into, don't you know?"

"Put it on and find out," ordered Seely, who felt that man had intelligence, and hence did not need to be humored.

"Not so bad an idea," acquiesced Taggart, obediently sogging away.

"James Seely," attacked Miss Ritter, sweeping down upon him in a muggy gray satin evening gown which she eyed with scorn. "Am I supposed to be going to a ball or to the cleaners?"



*Seely and his invited friends accidentally gazed in upon a feeding troupe.*

"To a ball in a white dress," explained Seely, unruffled again.

"White?"

"White. You'll photograph prettier than a dream, Miss Ritter. Old clothes take much better than new, so they tell me; and dead white is barred by the camera man. Trust me."

The appearance of that same camera man—most toothsomely amused by the entire freak—marked the beginning of business.

Since the play was practically acted hindside before—the exigencies of photo plot requiring that all scenes taking place in a certain setting, or in certain costumes, come off in a bunch, quite regardless of their actual sequence in the story—nobody knew very much

what it was about except that it was a romantic tale of love and treachery in the tropics. Love was Miss Ritter, treachery was Evelyn, and the tropics were potted palms without end.

"Play facing the camera, but don't look into it," begged the patient grinder of that artistic coffee mill.

Evelyn took to treachery like a duck to water, and began to enjoy herself and act very inspiringly. It was only *play*—she told herself.

As Manning's first passion—he was an American soldier—she flirted with him most cheerfully. Then Miss Ritter appeared on the scene, and was supposed to arouse in him the dawnings of true love.

"Show the smit, Jack," instructed Jim Seely esoterically, speaking a language foreign to his disposition. "Show the smit."

The "smit" was shown by a lingering handshake, a beautiful opening of Manning's eyes, and a droop of the jaw.

"Bully," criticized Seely enthusiastically. "Don't quit. Hop to it and hang."

These definite orders indicated that Manning had to saunter off with his new *inamorata*, leaving the old.

"Wilt a bit," Seely told the forsaken one. "Then chirk up and swear to snatch him back."

To follow such directions on the spur of the word, yet never to glance at the instructor, taxed one's ingenuity and self-command.

But Evelyn's "wilt" was poignant, and her "chirk" was confident.

"For he is mine," she said aloud. "And I can bring him to me."

Words came to her without effort.

"Mosey off, Maude Adams," ordered Seely. "You're through for a spell."

Alma had less luck improvising lines. In her rôle of general consoler, she had to kneel by the dead Taggart, and presumably pray his guilty soul into paradise. But she seemed mute.

"Say something," implored Seely, hopping about excitedly. "That's a lovely picture. Pick up your beads and pray."

"Domino, domino, double six domino," intoned Alma, rolling her beautiful eyes to heaven, as she bent over the corpse. "Oh, come seven! Oh, haste, eleven! I bridge it to you, partner, and may Heaven help us both, for I've not a face card in my hand! Amen."

Here Donald Taggart resolutely left off being dead and sat up, rising from the waist as if on a hinge. His face was serious as a coffin lid.

"I feel obliged to inform you," he warned his once wife, "that I shall be impelled to lawff outrageously if you persevere with such amazin' orisons."

He then reflexed the hinge and composed himself again to death.

"You three-ply English It!" fumed Seely. "A hundred feet of film ruined!"

"Beg pardon, I 'ssure you," apologized Taggart, fumbling in the "toggery" for his eyeglass and anguished not to find it.

The final scene, an early one in the story, showed the temporary triumph of the Spanish girl over her fairer rival. Manning and Miss Ritter were making poetic love on a balcony, while Evelyn, in the garden beneath, listened madly, ready at any moment to use a dagger on her recreant lover, but winning him back by throwing him a flower from her hair as he was about to follow his lady to the dance.

From the property room, a tray of artificial blossoms had been brought Evelyn to chose from.

"I'd pitch him that pink plunktiti,"

suggested Seely, designating a big Hibiscus.

"Please, no," begged Evelyn. "Let me use this white jasmine. In life it is so wonderfully perfumed, a regular love letter! He'd be a *fool* not to know what it meant!"

"O. K.," agreed Seely. "We'll play this scene to music; it will help."

An obliging something out of sight, therefore, played dreamy waltz music, and help it certainly did, inspiring the balconied lovers to bill and coo rhythmically, and aiding the effectiveness of Evelyn's sinuous approach through the garden.

In her black-and-gold finery she looked as lithely dangerous as a hornet, and, listening to the amorousness going on above her, she seemed to feel and express every note of suffering in the whole scale of human jealousy.

"Gum! You're some Sarah Bernhardt, keep it up!" encouraged Jim Seely.

She was miles from hearing him, being entirely engrossed in her own realization of the situation, and acting with a spontaneous abandon she never could have achieved a second time. Jack Manning had no difficulty in portraying the necessary hint of disquiet supposed to be upsetting him; he was far more conscious of the slender shadow beneath him than of the placid blond beauty before him. Then, when that placid blond beauty meandered off the platform, smiling at him to follow, there came an innovation. Instead of the flower, Evelyn first flung the dagger. Its point struck the balcony rail and held it quivering there like a menace. While Manning looked at it, Evelyn tossed him the jasmine from her hair. He had his choice.

"Well thought out," applauded Seely. "Keep up the clip."

Manning caught the flower, and looked over the balcony. Evelyn reached up her hand to him, and he drew her quickly to his level, a trifle undecided what to do next. The placid blonde was teetering in the balance.

"Kiss me," were the words Evelyn used to overthrow her.

"Evelyn!" Manning obeyed with a species of fascinated helplessness. He kissed her and put his arms around her.

"Break away," professionally directed Seely. "We're through now."

When the party were again in civilianized garb, and were preparing to go, Jim Seely sought out Evelyn and cornered her.

"Mrs. Holcomb," he said gravely. "I want to speak to you about something."

"About what?" she demanded coldly, on the defensive.

But as he spoke on, she softly let go her tensely held breath and lowered her indefinable guard; his subject-matter was peaceful in the extreme.

"Will you do me a favor, Mrs. Holcomb? Will you arrange to have Miss Thalberg visit you some morning, and then let me come, too, but without telling her so beforehand?"

The morning she paid her visit to Evelyn, Camilla was as pale and unbending as a big wax lily. Failure and poverty were increasing her queenliness instead of diminishing it. Her sky-blue eyes were quite royally proud. Stripped of rings, clothed almost in shabbiness, she radiated a positive quality of reserve which forbade as insults all pity or offers of help.

In the midst of trivialities, Evelyn could not keep from breaking out with:

"Dear, why *don't* you go back home?"

The "dear" evidently jarred, hinting, as it did, at condolence. Camilla grew two beautiful inches taller.

"Abroad I have no longer any home," she vouchsafed to explain. "My beloved parents are dead. I would have to take from relatives, which is, of course, impossible. I hope there is no one living who would *dare* to try to assist me—until I ask it."

"No, oh, no!" hastily and vaguely promised Evelyn. And as she spoke, Seely came on the scene.

When the somewhat strained greetings were over and done with, Evelyn saw such abstraction of resolve in his oxlike brown eyes that she prepared to efface herself into another room.

Jim Seely interpreted her intention and prohibited it. They were all uncomfortably standing, Camilla gorgeously defiant, Evelyn nervous, Seely nerved.

"Please remain, Mrs. Holcomb. With your permission, I am going to propose to Miss Thalberg right in front of you, here and now. I have to—or not at all. She refuses always to grant me an interview. May I go ahead?"

"Why, don't ask *me!*" stammered Evelyn, distinctly apprehensive of results. She dropped into a chair and watched. The others stood.

"With Mrs. Holcomb's permission you are going to do *what* to 'Miss Thalberg'?" carefully inquired Camilla, Diana personified. The pale, moonlight scorn on her face was startlingly lovely.

"How beautiful you are," mentioned Seely, not temporizing, but obeying the vision's compulsion.

"I always look beautiful in the morning," haughtily conceded Camilla. "Everybody ought to." She threw a critical glance at her distant reflection in a mirror. "And I can even look very much prettier than that when I want to. But tell me this word again you are going to do."

"Propose."

"Propose what?"

"Marriage."

"To whom?"

"To you."

"With whom?"

"With me."

"You are, perhaps, amusing yourself?" inquired Camilla terribly.

"Has it that kind of an appearance?" defended Seely hotly. "What right have you to use this tone?"

"What right!" flamed Camilla. "Have you forgotten I am a Thalberg?"

"Never once. It's what I want in you."

That the emperor was constrained to inquire for Thalbergs before knighting any one else no longer intimidated Jim Seely a row of pins' worth. The emperor evidently didn't feed his nicest Thalberg properly; in that, he, Jim Seely, intended to give him points. If somebody had to shrink in his vest, it was up to the emperor.

"Don't dare say 'want' and refer to me!" stormed Camilla.

"I must," persisted Seely.

He caught her two hands in his. Her arms straightened rigidly. So did his. All that their clasp did was to keep them a yard apart.

"I ab-so-lute-ly lack the words for this," hissed Camilla, whiter than before, were that possible.

"I'm glad of it," admitted Seely. "For I'm going to give them to you. Now, Camilla, be game. All on earth I want you to do is to look me over attentively and consider me your husband. Give me a square auditing. If the account's short, let me know where, and I bet I can dig up and make good. Come on, now. Imagine me your husband. Then tell me what you don't like. Get your eye on the job, Camilla; it's more to me than you guess. Put the thing to the test and let's have it over. All I want you to say is this, 'Jim's my husband—what's the matter with him?' Are you game? All right. Say it."

"Jim's my husband," raced Camilla; furiously confident. Then the whole idea suddenly gripped her throat and choked her dumb. Jim Seely, the bête noir, could be withstood; but this Jim Seely, the man, soft-eyed, wooing, powerful, was altogether another proposition. "What is the matter with him?" questioned Camilla wonderingly, a rush of red dyeing her face.

"Nothing," corroborated Seely, humbly drawing her into his arms. "And I knew it."

"Is it love I have felt for you all this time?" panted Camilla, struggling unavailingly to get away from him.

"I think so. I've always thought so," quite honestly announced Seely, taking precaution to tighten his grip. "That's

why I've hung to it, frost or no frost. But I hope the thermometer's rising at last, Camilla. God knows I'll try to make it."

At this he had the wisdom to kiss her, and the thermometer rose, indeed.

Forgotten by her busy visitors, Evelyn, a quiet shadow in her now bright home, leaned back in her chair and sur-



"I ab-so-lute-ly lack the words for this!" hissed Camilla.

veyed them with a gentle astonishment, in which personal regret played no small part. If this sweet shamelessness, this tender conquest, and proud surrender were wooing, then she had been pretty badly cheated, and the loss could never be made up to her. She saw enacted before her the everlasting miracle of a man's soul growing rich by giving itself away, of a woman's soul gaining freedom by going into bondage.

Not but what Camilla stuck to a few

of her fettering caprices. For when Seely grew secure to madness and attempted to unload some of his troublesome small change upon her, she smiled as derisively as ever.

"The pride of the Thalbergs can beg easier than borrow," she reminded him.

"What's the use of pride if it can't stand a jolt when a jolt's due?" begged Seely cleverly. "Pride that's worth a cent ought to be able to do *anything*."

"True," considered Camilla, startled.

"You give in?"

"I give in."

"All right," joyously cried Seely, beginning to impoverish himself.

"No; I meant a different plan," stated Camilla, drawing finely back. "I meant I will stand the jolt of work in the moving-picture studio."

To mention it incidentally, this is exactly what she did, so that in time the rings and chains came back.

On the neutral ground of Evelyn's parlor rug, he endeavored to battle down the idea, but was forced to let it live.

Then he bethought himself of a necessary confession of his own, and the contrition it involved took a great deal of the brightness from his face.

"Camilla," he said, miserably brave. "I drink."

"So do I likewise," remarked she, cheering him. Half a glass, when it was cold and she was hot, was her entire meaning.

"To excess?" he cried, his face as gray as his hair.

"What ex-act-ly is excess?"

"I get drunk."

"Dr-r-runk?" She hurled the word with loathing. It had suddenly murdered her love and hope. Then her magnificent courage set about resuscitation. She drew a breath of mighty resolve. "It is for me to save you. I, for one, will not permit you to be ruined. You shall never get drunk again."

"I will," groaned Seely. "There's no stopping it."

"There's no stopping it?"

"No."

"Then," said Camilla, passionately

promising, "I, too, will get drunk. I, Camilla, your wife, will, like you, go with you into the streets, reeling, unconfined, a thing of shame and jest, for men to pity, to jeer at, to despise. I swear it to you on my oath."

"God!" said Jim Seely, cornered. She would do it.

Marvel of marvels, Stephen was home, presumably for the evening, and as he splashed cheerfully across the room to get to the clamoring telephone, Evelyn's erratic mind remembered an old toy in the Quimby attic. It had belonged to Mrs. Quimby, and therefore had been made in an era when a child's eyesight was never considered by the toymaker as now. This relic looked like a round hatbox, painted black without and white within, and cut into innumerable slits. By revolving the box and applying the eye to the place where the slits whizzed past, one could see pretty maidens jumping ropes of roses, or gallant youths leaping fences on horseback. By forgetting one's cramped position and one's aching vision, one could pretend to a vast amount of spurious excitement.

This—so Evelyn dreamily reflected—was the silent way, and apart, that she spent her life in watching people of affairs. She seemed to herself to be always on her knees in the shadow, taking dumb peeps at activities in which she had no real part. Also, they made her head ache. Her head ached very steadily these cold spring days. The box was revolving again, and Stephen was performing—at the telephone. He was quite as big and handsome as the young men on horseback who leaped fences, and quite as uninterested in her.

"Yes, indeed," he was saying heartily. "Mrs. Holcomb is at home. And, *mirabile dictu*, so am I. Haven't seen you in an age. Come on up."

Evelyn winced from the crash of the instrument as he put it down, not that she was noisy, but because she was morbidly nervous. She knew herself to be on exaggerated terms with the world, like an invalid kept alive on arsenic. She was aware that folks put

her down for phlegmatic, and she was equally aware that her own fires of banked passion were consuming her.

"It's that good-for-nothing, young Manning," announced Stephen jovially. "I told him to come up."

"Yes, I heard you," responded Evelyn evenly.

Her hands were loosely clasped, her lashes were half aslant and steady, but the inward fire broke into a dart of flame and seared her heart. For a reason that she flattered herself she alone knew, she had refused to be at home to Manning since the day at Seely's studio. She was glad a third person was to be present—even if that person *were* her husband. The oddity of the word "even" failed to strike her.

The guest was at the door.

"Come along in," was Stephen's greeting, in the careless idiom of a schoolboy. To show that he meant his welcome, he whacked Manning resoundingly on the shoulder. Stephen and "moods" were two.

"If he hadn't married me," reflected Evelyn, watching the difference in the two men, "I could have liked him."

"Delightfully pleasant to see *you* at home," Manning was telling him with affable, graceful insincerity. There was a hidden note in his voice which was meant for her. She knew it. She was hoping for it.

The black box of existence was whizzing at a lively rate just now—two stepplechasers to keep an eye on.

"Evelyn, this is Mr. Manning," sang out Stephen, feeling that a new introduction wasn't so tremendously out of order. "He's more than a stranger."

"Not to me," said Evelyn. She felt an overwhelming respect for truth—it told so little.

Manning's flashing smile—it had a frank enough look—sought out the shadowy corner where she still listlessly sat.

"No; Mrs. Holcomb and I meet often, I'm happy to say."

So he, too, made friends with truth.

"Sit down," invited Stephen, making the invitation compulsory by jabbing the rim of the chair in the kink of his vis-

itor's knee. Stephen was a born anatomist

"Thanks," accepted Manning as he fell.

While the two men smoked and talked, Evelyn compared them, always to Stephen's advantage, his primitiveness was so bearable. It made one feel that Stephen, already delightful, could always improve, and could never deteriorate. His worst came up to the mark of many another's best. If he had only chosen to fall in love with her instead of marry her, how he could have *shaken* her into life! Stephen prodigally spilled life out of him with every move, as a child merrily spills cards when it tries to shuffle. Manning handled his own deck with the guarded deftness and hidden trickery of a gambler. Nobody ever knew what he held till he chose to tell.

Evelyn fancied herself slightly weary of him—he was so easy to manage, in spite of his slippery agility. Still measuring him up against Stephen, whom she could not manage at all, she tacitly made up her mind that she could go as far as she wanted with Manning, and always be able to set his limits. How had she gotten her hold over him? She could not tell. Had she known, she would have tried the tactics on Stephen. Stephen, in love, would certainly be a whirlwind. Nothing would keep on its feet, or touch earth; all would go crashing up toward heaven.

"In *love*?" Was that, then, her acknowledged plane upon which the other stood? Her loosely clasped hands fell apart and clenched, her veiled eyes opened wide, and she got up quickly from her chair—to move, to act—she would die if she had to keep on forever sitting still!

"How did you know it was going to ring?" marveled Stephen, hastening to the telephone.

"Yes!" He answered through it, buttoning his coat briskly as he spoke. "Certainly. Right away. Good-by."

Professionalism had him again in its grip. He hurried on his overcoat, grasped gloves and hat, and waited tentatively for Manning to do likewise.

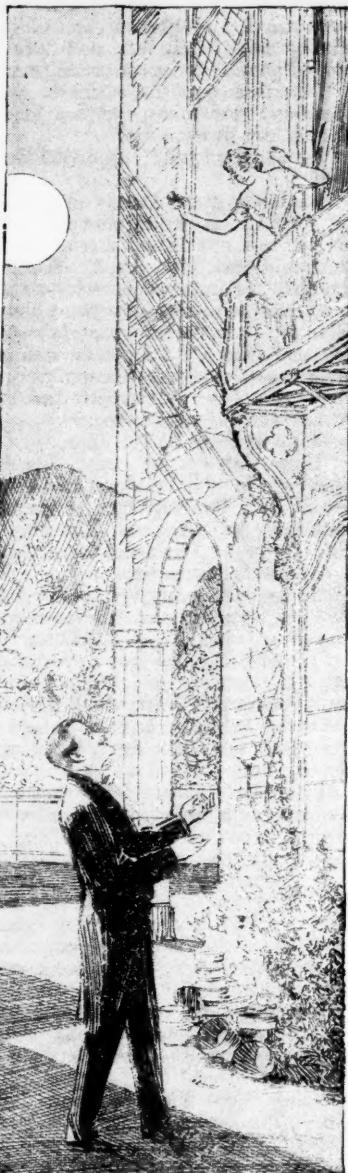
That a wife was necessarily without male companionship the moment her husband departed the house, was a Euclidian axiom of Stephen's early Danboro training.

"Going my way?" he suggested, seeing his visitor rise.

"Not unless we play duets," pronounced Manning, strolling to the piano, and sitting down to it. "With Mrs. Holcomb's permission, I'm staying right here."

"Now that's good of you," granted Stephen, honestly appreciative of the other's self-sacrifice. "That's good of you. Well, I'm off."

And so he was, with brisk slam of door and cheerfully dying step and whistle. The room quieted pacifically. Things no longer seemed to jounce about and fly up. The lamp glowed with soft steadiness. Influenced for peace, Evelyn curled back into her chair, not now at war with herself or



*She loosened the flower from her hair and held it out.*

any other, and listened to the eerily alluring wail of the piano.

"And what's the inspiration of that?" she demanded calmly when the lament finished.

"I'm not going to tell you," as calmly responded the player, swinging around on the piano stool so as to direct his disapproval in a straight line to her. "Not while you are in that mood. For the purpose of response, however, I can call it 'The Requiem for Seely's Last Jag.'"

"Oh, did he?" frowned Evelyn.

"No, he didn't—which would account for the sadness of the requiem. There's no sorrow in life like the loss of a fine jag. And the Silver-haired Jim had arranged for a farewell beauty. His Thuringian Venus, I'd have you know, had put her lovely foot down—marriage as a wineless feast, or no marriage at all. Jim determined that his last ski should take him pretty near from here to Hades. Honestly, I was a bit worried for him. His semiannual falls from grace are bad enough without any farewell trimmings added. But I needn't have worried. Jim's a wonder. Do you know what he did? Pulled up at the last minute and cut the whole thing."

"I'm glad."

"You said that without fireworks. How far you are from comprehending the bigness of Jim's feat! Myself, I don't see how he had the strength. Why, he was taking his first drink when he decided not. He deliberately put down the glass and walked away from it. Said he had indulged before, not because he had to, but simply because nobody particularly cared; that he could conquer the habit now as well as the next time; that if Camilla didn't want a drunken husband, she didn't want a drunken lover, either. He fought only two days. At the end of that time he called for a sip of cognac, the most tantalizing thing he could do to himself, drank it—just to show that he was master—and is now safer than the Bank of England."

"He's splendid."

"Evelyn, *she* did it. It's *the woman*

*who cares* that makes a man or smashes him. Not 'a' woman; 'the' woman. Lots of girls before now have tried to straighten Jim, and only kinked him a little more. The woman who cares can do what she pleases with a man. But she has to tell him she cares. How else is he to be sure? She doesn't actually have to speak. There are other ways of letting a man know."

Camilla and Jim Seely were neither of them in the end of this speech. Evelyn laboriously carried them into place.

"You mean the woman a man marries," she stated.

"Or ought to have married."

"He ought to, and he's going to."

"Oh! Jim?"

"Yes."

"It's good your mind's running on Jim Seely," commented Manning affably, "for he'll be here very soon. So I'm going."

He got up.

"Mr. Seely coming here?"

"So he told me."

"Whatever for?"

"That he *didn't* tell me. Took clear pains not to. It's evidently something I'm to be out of. You haven't asked me to stay."

"You said you were going."

"And I am. Moreover, this time I'm going to stay away till you send for me."

"Good-by," she said, laughing a little.

"You think it's going to be as long as that?" he interpreted. "We'll see."

He played two clever last cards—by way of departure—played them in whimsical silence to make them more impressive: he went first to the piano and repeated the final bars of the song he had refused to name; next, approaching her, he lifted her hand respectfully to his lips and kissed it with a soft, lasting pressure. He then went.

He had left her two things to think about; that her lonely hours remembered him as music, remembered him as affection.

When Seely came, as he did soon, she welcomed him rather abstractedly. He

was too wide awake for her drowse of dreams.

"Aren't you very well?" he asked. He kept on his overcoat and held to his hat, signs that he was merely on tour, and was visiting elsewhere.

"Oh, yes, I think so," answered Evelyn, a knot coming into her throat, and the tears fighting to show. It had been very long since any one had been concerned about the state of her health, and the kindness unnerved her. "But I seem to want air. This is my first winter in a city, and I'm tired, tired. It lasts too long. Why, the arbutus must be out somewhere, and none of us hunting for it. Think of it, Mr. Seely!"

"That's partly what I've come for," he enthused. "I knew you'd help me out. Mrs. Holcomb, I've a country place near here, only in Westchester County, but it's true enough country. Lovely. And the house is lovely, too. I want a few of us to go up there for a day and night while the moon's full."

"While the moon's full?"

"Just so. The moon. Not me. Give me time, and I'll explain. Mrs. Holcomb, you're not much more than a little girl, and I'm big enough and most old enough to be your father, but you've sort of mothered Camilla and me through our love affair, and I've a new favor to ask you. You know what Browning says: 'Never the time, the place, and the loved one all together?' Well, with your help, by gum, I'll bunch them *once* in a life, anyhow. But suppose I said to Camilla, 'Come to my house, for I want to spoon in peace in the moonlight.' Can you see her coming?"

"No."

"No more could I. So I asked her to visit it with a party in order to suggest alterations in the wall paper. Will you bring her?"

"Yes," promised Evelyn, laughing openly.

"Go on and laugh," he permitted good-temperedly. "For I don't firmly believe it's got any wall paper. It's tinted throughout. It's really very pretty. It's one of my presents to Camilla. I've sent my housekeeper up

there ahead of us, with servants and things. We can go any time you say. I've asked only Miss Somers and Taggart."

"What!"

"Well, I don't know," mused Seely, running his hand composedly through his white mane, and considering his combination. "I think it'll work out like a charm. However, I asked your husband to come, and he said he would if he could, but knew he couldn't. Now, can't you wheedle him around?"

"No," said Evelyn succinctly. "I can't. Won't I do by myself?"

"I should say! But," frankly, "I'm afraid you'll be lonely. If you could think of another man——"

"Mr. Manning," selected Evelyn. The immediate change in Seely's face made her add surprisedly: "Not if he wouldn't be agreeable to you."

"He'd be agreeable to *me* all right," threw in Seely swiftly. "I was thinking of *you*."

"Me?" asked Evelyn, quietly defensive. "I like him very much."

"Then down he goes, down he goes!" promised Seely, sweeping all that didn't concern him right out of the window.

Though cold, the day of the house party had been a complete success; and the evening had been hardly less of one, except that Camilla refused to cheapen romance by any unreserve, and, therefore, made her lover admire his moonlight in plenty of company.

Now, at eleven o'clock, when good nights were about to be said, everybody was congregated in the reception hall, where a good fire tore cheerfully up the chimney, and from whose mantels and brackets innumerable candles threw soft lights and friendly shadows over the paneled wealth of woodwork. Seely liked big baronial effects. Manning and Taggart were at a little table finishing a game of chess, while the others took a farewell warming at the fire.

"Well, Mrs. Holcomb," remarked Seely, his regretful eye on the clock. "I suppose we'll have to give your husband up." He evidently classed Stephen among exemplary home-comers.

"Did you really expect him?" she could not keep from asking, her lip curling.

"Why, yes; there are tribes of trains," he answered, as if trains were the whole thing. "You must look after him better, or he'll turn into an inveterate gadabout. Reform him."

"But think it over well first," counseled Alma pensively. "Many a wife reforms a husband only to find out that he was less of an annoyance to her when a curse than when a blessing."

"I thank you for a perfect day," said Camilla, extending her hand to her host, all her heart and her soul in her lovely eyes.

"There is just one thing you haven't seen," he remembered. "The conservatory when it is lit. Come and see it with me now. And I will find you a flower."

An answering glory of devotion filled his voice and glance.

Evelyn's deprived heart stormed and lulled, stormed and lulled, as she watched them.

"You will find us *all* a flower, I am sure," amended Camilla, graciously inviting the other two. "Come."

"*Unser Gott in Himmel*, the pill she is!" sighed Alma, sympathizing with Seely's soul jolt. "Turning down a love-lit conservatory, with a man like Jim around!"

But Evelyn admired the girl's regal maidenliness.

In the heated conservatory, a strong whiff of fragrance turned her suddenly faint. Almost anything was able to upset her these days.

"What have you got in here that smells like a funeral?" she questioned, smiling, but leaning dizzily against a column.

"Good Lord!" he criticized, but he experimentally sniffed till he reached a slender branch starred with a few white flowers. "This, I guess. Jasmine."

"I love it. May I have it?"

Seely broke the cluster off and came and put it in her hair.

"It's where you wore it in the play," he explained, as a mild excuse for his liberty.

"Evelyn, you witch, you look mighty pretty," observed Alma, taking note of results. "Whence comes the color?"

Evelyn felt her own cheeks with the backs of her hands.

"I think I have a fever," she suggested.

"Have it often," advised Alma. "It's becoming."

Later, alone in her own room, Evelyn discovered that sleep was going to be hard to summon. She tried to read, but could not, the conflict of lights hurting her eyes, for the blaze of the fire on her hearth put the candle power to shame. But it danced and flickered, till the page danced and flickered with it. Next, the enormousness and deathly quiet of the house got on her nerves, frightening her. She went to her door and double-locked it. This shut-in effect soon gave her a sense of jailed suffocation, and she unlatched a doorlike window and stepped out on a balcony overlooking the garden. Hearing the men's voices, she crept to the rail and looked down at them. They were having a final midnight smoke and prowl, and Seely, with a lantern in one hand, a prod stick in the other, was making his male guests view utterly invisible seeds he had planted.

"Nasturtiums," he murmured, right beneath her, digging a location with the stick.

"Are you three hiding things or finding them?" queried Evelyn quizzically above them.

The three men straightened their backs and gazed up at her.

"Go in," ordered Seely in a wrathful whisper. "You'll take cold."

"No; you people will have taken all there is."

She saw Donald Taggart appreciatively adjust his eyeglass. For a taciturn man he had very conversational manners.

"Let's go," said the sage Seely to his companions. "She'll stay as long as we do."

He moved off. Taggart after him. Manning waved them away.

"I'll catch up," he promised them. "But I have to *Romeo* this *Juliet* for a

minute. Make off, you asses. How can I do it with you listening?"

"Now that the lantern is gone, I can hardly see you," she said, talking far down to his shadow.

"I can see you; the firelight plays over you."

"Who won the game of chess?"

"Tag."

"Shame! Why didn't you?"

"My thoughts were not on it."

"Poor thing! Where were they?"

"On you."

"I did not feel them."

"You did."

"Isn't this a grand big house?"

"Ripping fine old castle."

"And haven't we had a good time?"

"We have. Glad I've been in it. But, as Jim loves me only moderately, can't puzzle out why I got asked."

"Through me."

"You? You asked him to ask me? You wanted me?"

"I asked him to ask you."

A wind shivered across the night.

"Kem along, old chap," urged Taggart's small voice from unseen distance, like a plaint in a telephone.

"Good night, Evelyn."

"Good night, Jack."

She loosened the flower from her hair and held it out. He raised his hands. She dropped it into them. Then she left him and stepped back into her room, closing the window behind her, conscious for the first time of the cold.

The roaring fire was a good friend, and she sat on the floor in front of it as she braided her hair, and dreamed. When she got up, and undressed, and put out the candles, she laughed softly to see the room as ablaze with light as before.

"It's going to be hard to sleep," she decided.

And she found it so. For two hours she lay staring, wide awake, listening to the queer silences of the country. Once in a while a distant train would shriek dismally on its dark way, cutting a gash through the night, and making its consequent stillness all the more poignant and lonely. Finally, when the fire threatened to die out, she got up

in a panic to mend it. Anything but blackness!

She knelt down by the hearth and soon had it leaping with flame again. Its companionable sizz and splutter constrained her to remain beside it, idly busy poking small fagots under the logs to make the roaring blaze still fiercer. Then, startled by a sound different from the crackle of the fire, she looked around to see a man entering unhastily by way of her window, his back toward her, he being methodically refastening the catch.

As she leaped to her feet, a scream just rising to her lips, he turned and spoke reassuringly.

"Do not be alarmed," he said with studied quiet and matter-of-factness. "It is only I, Jack."

Still casually natural, he adjusted the curtains back into place.

She raised her hand and pointed toward them.

"Please go," she ordered. "Don't make any mistake. Go at once. Do as I say. You have not the right to be here."

"I have the right," he contradicted reasonably. He glanced down at what he held, the jasmine flower. "It was given to me by you."

Her extended arm dropped to her side, for she saw that her hour of command was quite past. His manageability was gone, in fact, had never existed. He had always seen forward to this minute, and would have been blind not to. At this eleventh hour she admitted to herself all the truths which, admitted sooner, would have saved her from it. She had led him every step of the way to the place where he now stood. He was, most properly, neither suppliant nor recreant, for he was not thief nor beggar; he stood erect, a creditor. He was sure of himself. He was sure of her. Logic, justice even, was on his side. What consistent grounds were hers on which to order him to leave?

But she herself could go.

She made a quick step to the door, but stopped midway. To go would be dangerous. For no one must suspect.

He made no move to hinder her, seeming to know that she would ultimately do just what she did—come back to take the situation.

But when he approached her to put his arms around her, she moved from him, away and away, till she could go no farther, but stood against the wall, literally and figuratively. Then she motioned him to stand.

"I can't think," she confessed, aloud. "I can't think."

"Why should you—now?" he asked, still reasonably.

He took her hands from her temples and held them in one of his against his breast. Then he lifted the swinging braid of her hair, kissed it, and put the end of it on his shoulder—a chain of gold, connecting them.

"No," she said. "No. Let me tell you something: I love Stephen."

"You love me."

"Yes; I do love you."

"You admit it at last."

"When have I not admitted it? I am beginning to see clearly. You have always known."

"Yes."

"But I love Stephen, too."

"Too?"

"I can understand your jeering at it, but it is true. I learned first to love

you. You seemed to know how to make me. Loving you, I grew to love Stephen. Terribly. But he does not love me. He never will. That is why I—"

"Go on."

"That is why I — It is too wicked to say."

"Yet you did it?"

"Accuse me. I deserve that you should despise me."

"Accuse you? Never I. Despise you? For calling me to you when you knew it was the wish of my heart?"

"Won't you understand?" She quietly tried to withdraw her hands from captivity; but they were not freed.

"I do understand. I understand that we love each other and are together."

Against the wall, indeed! — driven there, defenseless, by no one but herself, herself, whose lifelong culpable indifference to the *actuality* of thoughts had kept her in a make-believe, narrow world of low standards, or distorted values, of false security. Her

meekly barren childhood had not been her misfortune, but her fault. The same fault had now made her the captive of her own liberty—through laggardness—like Alma's lion. How bravely easy it would have been to have said



*She only knew that her strength was ebbing like a tide, and was carrying consciousness with it.*

to this man in the beginning, "I know I am fond of you, but *too* fond to let you or the world criticize me. Feel sure of this." He who meant nothing that he said, was he any more untrue than she who said nothing that she meant? That silence could be a liar, that moral inertia was active sin, that idle complaisance could be as guilty as aggression, were truths which now broke in upon her with overpowering suddenness, robbing her of ability to sort them one from another; she could only sense them in one confusing whole. She was like a child hearing a magnificent orchestra for the first time, unable to hear the harmonies, only the crash.

"Go away!" was all she could say. "Go away!"

"No. I believe the kiss that you gave me. I believe the flower that you dropped to me.. And I stay."

As his words ended, her heart gave a great leap of exultation. The door handle was tried. After the first failure, it was tried a second time, as if the person trying it had no reason for imagining it to be fastened.

The two looked at the rotating handle with unwilling fascination.

The experimenter in the corridor finally spoke:

"May I come in, Evelyn? It is I. Unlock the door."

"That is Stephen," recognized Evelyn drearily. "And I think"—almost listlessly unanxious in her relief—"that you had better go the way you came. For I must open the door to him."

Her despairing fatigue, more than cowardice, made her wait a few minutes before going to the door. Outside of it, the cheerful voice was still guardedly clamoring. It took her long, too, to force her numbed fingers to turn the key. She paid no heed to the other's departure, for it had ceased to be of vital consequence to her. She only knew that her strength was ebbing like a tide and was carrying consciousness with it.

The key at last turned, and she swerved from the menace of the widely flung door.

"I heard you talking, or I would not

have disturbed you," began Stephen, lightly enough. He was entertained by his own inopportunity, and he unsuspectingly expected her to be the same. But as his glance around the room showed it to be empty, doubt leaped into his voice. "I got off the train some three hours ago. But the freight agent had fallen from a truck and hurt himself badly—broken some ribs—I've been all this time fixing him up. Reaching here a few moments since, I was intending to stretch out on some chairs down below, not to rouse the house, when I heard your voice. So I came up. You were talking. What about? Some one was with you. Who? And where has he gone? Tell me. And why has he gone? What is the matter? The reason that you don't explain? For God's sake, Evelyn, say something! Won't you answer me? *Can't* you?"

She rallied her spent forces into strength enough to speak one furious sentence.

"You should have come before," she accused magnificently.

She fell, with heavy, crashing straightness, like a hewn tree.

Shocked, he picked her up and laid her upon the bed, too stunned himself to do much else for the moment but stand and look at her, his darkening eyes holding the same frantic questions his tongue had lately sped. Again, in bewilderment, his glance searched the room. The nagging click of the window doors, fretted by the night breeze, seemed to answer him. He locked them fast, dragged the curtain across, then dropped into a chair, his face in his hands.

He should have come before—or not at all.

Left in sole possession of the house by its owner, accorded the help of that owner's servants, Stephen for four weeks watched at his wife's bedside, and fought an evil which taxed his whole skill—typhoid fever.

And because Evelyn in delirium said a vast number of things safer forgotten, he employed no constant nurse.

During those weeks, the outside

world indulged in the miracle of spring, but Stephen, working hard to ward off the miracle of death, had no leisure to note it. And his mind had nearer thoughts to busy it. Almost in an impersonal way he became intensely interested in the woman whose life he was defending. She did not seem to be Evelyn. He had cut off her heavy hair; and the slender, helpless boyishness of her made an appeal to his comradeship. The flighty things that she said to him from time to time in her ravings occasionally approached sense near enough to occupy his thoughts for long afterward. And her appearance was often amazingly sweet. Many a wakeful midnight did she sit up suddenly in bed, her eyes glassily bright, her cheeks and lips unreally crimson, her short hair waving, looking much like a French doll, to engage him in peremptory argument—always on the same general topic.

"I say it is very difficult to fall in love," she promulgated once, using the obstinately annoyed tone of fever talkers.

"Is it?" To respond was the only way to quiet her.

"I say it is! But, after the first time, it gets easier and easier."

"Does it?"

"Didn't you hear me? Easier and easier. You find out how. Like anything else, it takes practice. I think a wife, a loving one, could go on and love three or four or five men."

"Do you?"

"Or six or seven," she enlarged temperately. "She wouldn't, of course, but she could; unless she got enough love from the one."

"How much love is 'enough'?" he experimented. Since the vein was free, he might as well mine it.

"When is a teacup full?" she bickered impatiently. "You ask very silly questions."

From the lecture platform he had often held forth upon the important difference between the sexes, having put much thought on the subject. He now got a grasp on the idea that the sexes had some important sameness, too.

II

At another time her trend deviated.

"Before you knew, didn't you think that 'love' took *two* people?" she asked.

"I rather thought so."

"Well, it doesn't. You can do it better by yourself. It is what you give, not get."

This, too, he was finding out, for "love" was curiously close to the sentiment he felt for her, now that she usurped his whole time and skill. Yet there was something so monstrously unnatural in the idea that she had won that regard from him only by forfeiting the right to it, that he fought himself free from it.

Many and many another weird conversation did he hold with her, finding a charm in her, crazy, that he had entirely failed to find in her, sane. But whenever he thought of her as the girl he was married to, he loathed her. And he had wanted her to be less Puritanical, more "flexible"! Stephen was not the first man to discover that damnation may come to him through an answered prayer.

Then, one day in late April, when his anxiety kept him sitting close beside her to watch even her slumber, she woke and turned on her pillow to look at him with eyes that were clearly lucid.

The unusualness of his presence plainly made her doubt his identity for a few silent moments, but she finally broke into a smile.

"Why, it's Stephen," she said, stretching out her hand to him.

His profession, not himself, rejoiced tremendously, and he took and held the hand right gladly.

"Bravo, Evelyn!" he commended.

"Bravo, little girl!"

"Have I been ill?"

"Many weeks."

"Weeks? Who has been caring for me?"

"I."

"But who, when you have been gone?"

"I've not left you night or day, Evelyn."

The thanking tears washed into her eyes and her smile deepened happily.

"Stephen!" She pressed his hand,



*"When is a teacup full?" she bickered impatiently.*

and then took startled note of the fact that no friendly pressure came in answer.

Next, the unfamiliarity of the room added to her slowly gathering dread.

"Where am I?"

"Never mind, yet. Try to sleep again."

"I remember!" she whispered,anguished.

He relaxed his hold upon her hand, and let it drop away from him.

"Yes; that is what you think of me," she said incoherently. "I wish you had let me die."

She turned on the pillow from him, and lay facing dark depths of thought.

"I want Alma," she said after many minutes.

"She is not here."

"Send for her."

As soon as wire could reach and machine respond, Alma drove her car in through the gates. Pupkins had on a

pink bow, because it was spring; and he sneezed and watered at the eyes for the same reason. He was carried up to see the invalid.

What went on, Stephen never knew; for he restlessly paced the downstairs hall while the long interview was taking place.

When Alma at last descended to him, the sight of his haggard young face appeared to infuriate her, and her cheeks flushed suddenly pinker than the bow of Pupkins—whom she hugged under one arm.

"I've been hearing your praises sung, and it's made me hate you," she explained, bursting unexpectedly. "You never liked me before this, and you're going to like me less, for I've come to the conclusion to tell you a few things. She didn't ask me to. She didn't ask me to tell you *anything*, except, to be sure, that she's not another man's mistress, as you handsomely think. No, she didn't use just those words. She's not coarse enough. She's been married only once. I've been married twice, and am trying it a third time; so what, in the way of womanly delicacy of speech, can you expect from me?"

She shifted the attentively listening dog from her right arm to her left, and went on:

"The things I am about to say are none of my business; but I've been doing a deal of that, lately. For instance, I had Jim make the studio fire Camilla, which starved her into marrying him, so now they are abroad, Hoching der Kaiser for a spell instead of Yanking the Doodle; and I've nearly persuaded my delightful young friend, Mr. Jack Manning, to let Miss Ritter catch him; she's been after him so hard and long that she's winded, poor thing; and I've played Tag; have taught Tag a number of cute new tricks, among others how to

jump twice through the same wedding ring. You're right; who cares? Pardon me for boring you with others' affairs while your own need attention.

"What did you marry Evelyn for? She don't know, nor you. But I know. You married her to be her husband, and then forget about it. Suppose you remember. Your whole duty wasn't done when you presented her with a house. It was empty. An empty house is no more good to a wife than an empty office to a doctor. You didn't have to be so busy. Hasn't New York managed to gasp along, great, without you while you were in Berlin? In Chicago? Do you think its death rate has increased while you've been here taking care of your wife? Have you blamed yourself while watching her? Probably not. More likely you've been slumbering in your mind over your life's blight, mourning because her lovely purity was dead that had suddenly become so precious to you. Well, it's not dead. It's still there; so you can go on and neglect it some more. You drove her right up to the jump. But she didn't take it. If there's a next time, I hope she does. Why should you keep on robbing her of rights?"

She vehemently changed Pupkins again.

"Every kiss you haven't given her has robbed her of one she might have had, and needs. No, you're not equally bereft; not a bit of it. No man is. He can wink at a nursemaid, smile at a waitress, hug a stenographer, take a 'cousin' to the theater. All those scraps help. But propriety keeps a nice woman from kindred innocencies. And sends her in *deep*. Propriety's the improprietest institution that a woman can bump into. I've bumped my head lots; and know. Maybe you don't see it, but I've given you some good advice. Here's the last: Disappear. Husbands that are magnificent works of art show up best when viewed at a distance. You may take it, and you may not. I've advised many a man with the gripe to try a mustard footbath, only to have him pish-tush me to my face, and then adopt the cure as his own idea the min-

ute my back was turned. And I'm glad you're not grateful. I love to do things for ungrateful people, for *then*, when I'm through, I'm through. I've no use for people's gratitude; they seem to think it gives them such devilish claim upon you. You've no claim on *me*. Good-by. Tay dood-by to Man-Man, Pupkins."

When Evelyn was able to journey, the year was at young May; and its vivid newness of green leaf, its fairness of opening bud, only served—by reason of its incomparable brightness—to make the prospect of her life look darker.

"I am taking you back to Danboro," was Stephen's sternly brief explanation.

On the train he secured a drawing-room for her comfort, made her lie down, shaded her eyes, covered her feet, was professional perfection, but left her immediately for the friendlier comforts of the smoking car, coming back punctiliously at intervals to be systematically "amiable."

He doesn't care a tinker's dam—that was the song of the rail from Westchester County to Danboro, Connecticut. What pleasure, then, could she take in the glimpses of blue sky, in the rushing bushes of wild plum in blossom, or flowering dogwood? And what was she to say to her father and mother? What had been said to them?

Her dread of meeting them proved unnecessary, for no one was at the station to give her greeting. Why, something terrible must have been told to them, terrible, to keep them from her in her illness and trouble! The chill of some coming misery made her almost unable to walk as Stephen guided her courteously across the deserted platform to a hired carriage in waiting.

She was a criminal being driven to a prison, for the carriage lumbered on past her own dead-looking domicile, and did not stop till it reached the old Holcomb house.

There, there was at least the semblance of cheer; its shutters were open, its windows raised, its stately "Grecian blinds" were drawn quite gayly high. And the former housekeeper was back

at her old post smilingly to welcome them. Doubtless she had brought her "investment" of a husband back with her; he was probably the man who was watering the lawn. Two immense shrubs of "St. Joseph's Wreath" were in solid white bloom in front of the door. It all looked livably old-fashioned and sweet.

Stephen took Evelyn into the reception hall, removed her wraps, threw them to the housekeeper, who vanished with them, then put her down upon the "settle" to rest.

The settle was quite an antique; it was now a long, broad wooden sofa, comfortable with many cushions, and particularly substantial as to back; but the back could uncannily glide up and over at any minute of need, transforming it into a massive table.

Unenlightened in her mind by Stephen, who stood at a near distance and gazed at her steadily, she leaned back in her cushioned corner and tried to puzzle out the definition of her surroundings.

The dim room was alluringly peaceful, and it was fresh with many a fragrance of May, for in the open window seats were boxes of heliotrope and musk, and the mildly swaying white curtains wafted in a gush of sweetness with every twist and flap. On the hearth, a little fire flickered merrily, as if it knew it was a joke for such a day, but a good joke. And, oddest sight of all to city eyes, a smug and tiny kitten sat demurely upright before the fender, nodding in drowsy contentment over the extra warmth. The house seemed to be in running order.

"What does this mean?" Evelyn finally asked, raising her somber eyes to her persistently taciturn conductor.

"Home."

The word had many sides, and she looked at each of them without learning very much.

"You mean that you want me to live here?" she asked, after another dreary pause.

"Yes."

The loneliness of it!

"And you?" she asked timidly, at length.

"I plan to take a vacation."

His curtness was something so horribly new that she hesitated to cultivate it; but she felt that she must know more.

"Where will you be?" she ventured to ask.

"Where do you think?" was his uncompromising reply.

Resentment began to harden her.

"I don't know."

"Where ought I to be?" he demanded stonily. So unlike Stephen! What was the matter with him?

"I don't know." As stonily. Then, with a flash: "I have never known?"

"Where do you want me to be?"

The affability was dead as doornails. He was obviously caring a tinker's dam now—but what about?

"I don't know." She kept to the stubborn formula.

He made an indignant step closer to her.

"There is no place you wish me to be?"

"No!"

He smashed down beside her on the settle, his hand furiously striking the back of it, causing her to shudder away. In his blazing eyes was the nearest approach to violent anger she had ever surprised in them.

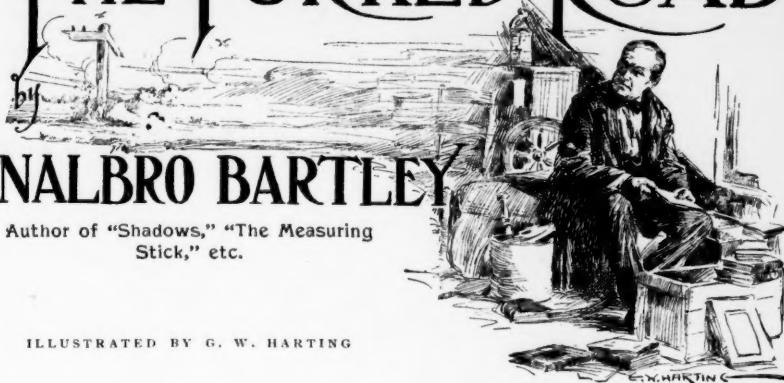
"Well, I'll tell you where I am going to be," he stated, with tornado effect. "I am going to be inside your two arms, where I belong, if I have to kill you first and wrap them, dead, around me afterward!"

It was fifty, a thousand, times better than Jim and Camilla.

She shrank still farther back, regarding him, fascinated. Her small face kindled with exultation, and her tantalizing prettiness came out and played its hide and seek.

"Very well; kill me," she permitted. "Kill me. But, Stephen, you don't really have to."

# THE FORKED ROAD



## NALBRO BARTLEY

Author of "Shadows," "The Measuring Stick," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

THE first hint of the forked road came after dinner at the Carlsons. Carlson, Dan Jordan's partner, waited until after forty before he married. The employees of the firm of Jordan & Carlson smiled discreetly behind the junior partner's back, as they pictured the future Mrs. Nathaniel Carlson.

The usual rumors of an ancient attachment securely ended, a sudden infatuation, a mere housekeeping arrangement for convenience, were whispered in the office from the shipping clerks up to the senior partner, Daniel Jordan himself.

"You know, Nell," Jordan told his wife, "Nat is too old to betake himself into the state of matrimony. The system of settling things at twenty and twenty-one, when white muslins and daring attempts at raising a mustache were on the top wave, comes out best. You can't get away from it. Then you grow old together." Jordan looked around the sitting room as he spoke.

It was a large, roomy affair, with chairs that were meant to be sat upon and sofa pillows bearing the marks of childish sham battles. There were enlarged photographs of the four children and their mother ranging around the room, a bit old-fashioned in the

matter of framing, but good likenesses. Jordan had had them done as a surprise for their fifteenth wedding anniversary.

Nell Jordan looked up from a mass of worsted work and smiled an acquiescence. She was a tiny, rather timid, woman, whose brown hair had faded meekly into a nondescript gray, and whose gentle brown eyes were hidden behind fierce bow working glasses.

"You think they shouldn't have married?" she asked gently. "You think Mr. Carlson is making a mistake?"

Jordan shifted his frame into a new position. He put his two hands behind the slightly bald head and stretched comfortably. "Looks that way to me," he said carelessly. "He's too old to go through the honeymoon haze. Lord, it seems another lifetime since you and I looked at the moon and tried to make a rhyme about it," he chuckled, with the assurance of a well-seasoned benedict. "You were the brownest-haired, pinkest-cheeked girl in town, Nell. Do you know, Alice is like you? She came into the office the other day in a blue wrap. You used to have one, didn't you?"

"It was a pale-green evening cape," his wife told him gravely, "with three rows of feather stitching around the

edge. I did the work on it when I watched Ned get well from typhoid."

"Um." Jordan closed his eyes for a cat nap. "Well, we've got to have the bride and bridegroom here for dinner. She's a college woman, too, and a suffragette and a club devotee, and Heaven knows what all. Do you think you can understand her appetite for hot biscuit?"

"Where did she meet him?"

"Some convention or other. I should have kept Nat home and gone myself. We're going to have a rush time, and he'll be mooning around times when he ought to be checking up mistakes."

The door opened, and a tall, slender girl, with her mother's brown eyes, looked in apologetically. "The sorority meets here next time," she announced.

"Tuesday?" A little network of worry lines came into play.

"Tuesday night. Ned said his frat was coming Monday night. Will it make any difference?"

"No, we'll have enough mayonnaise for both times, and maybe the cakes will hold out. You'll have to have favors, I suppose. And maybe you wanted to eat by candlelight?"

"I had thought of it," she admitted. "And, mother, every one of the Bride girls are wearing buckskin boots. Brown, blue, green, and white. You ought to see them."

"I don't know what their mother is thinking of." The worsted work was forgotten. "Did they have them on at the sorority meeting?"

Jordan opened his eyes to look at his oldest daughter with a slightly annoyed expression. "What are you studying now?" he demanded harshly.

Alice paused. "Studying? Why-ee, daddy, all the things I'm supposed to study."

"Thank you," answered her father; "I thought you might be planning the mural decorations for your college suite."

Alice and her mother looked at each other with a quick, understanding flash.

Ten minutes later Jordan strolled out to the garage. He found a small

boy sprawled underneath the car, working vigorously according to the directions given by a taller boy who sat in state on a near-by stool.

"Hello, little Jack Dale," said Jordan jovially. "Since when have you turned master mechanic?"

"I told him to go ahead, dad," interposed his son easily. "It's a lot finer to direct the thing than to go to it."

"And what would you do if you were stuck in the bosom of a mud road a few miles from home?"

"Walk back for help," was the nonchalant answer.

Jordan gave him a searching look. He noted the immaculate summer suit, the tan oxfords with brown silk socks, the panama hat with the Roman scarf band, the tan-and-white silk shirt, with tie to match. He remembered how his wife had planned on Ned's having everything in the way of clothes he wanted. He had never given it a second thought until now, as he stood watching him order a smaller boy about.

A week later, Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Carlson took dinner at the home of the senior partner. It was a constrained affair, despite the surplus amount of good cooking that crowded the table and the unrestrainable chatter on the part of the children. Nellie Jordan studied the bride at her leisure. She had called promptly, but found her out. Now, as she sat at the end of the table, slightly flushed and tired from kitchen duties, she noticed the easy, graceful manner of the woman, the pleasant, tactful smile when spoken to, the courteous, direct way in which she listened to whomever was speaking. She was not a young woman. She was that rare charm which a middle-aged woman sometimes possesses, a much worth-while attribute in the estimate of both men and women. She was well poised, yet simple and unaffected, showing that the best of care and the finest of thoughts had been hers. She wore her simple, slightly distinctive dinner gown with an almost foreign air, and the arts-and-crafts ring and pin

gave a finish that baffled her hostess. She began telling Dan Jordan about a walking trip in Norway when they carried the knapsacks on their backs and stopped at peasant huts for meals.

"It was a wonderful lark," she finished, with a girlish laugh. "Just imagine sleeping on the floor rolled up in smokey blankets and eating all sorts of things cooked in interesting-looking, dirty dishes!"

"How could you?" asked Mrs. Jordan literally. "Weren't you afraid of germs?"

Mrs. Carlson turned her graceful head swiftly toward the end of the table. "I am sure we ate millions of germs," she answered, "but—the sky—oh, we hadn't time to think of germs!"

"I'd never sleep in a strange bed," persisted her hostess, "and I'd have to know what was in the things I ate. *I'd have to.*"

Jordan gave a slight expression of annoyance. "Mrs. Jordan has not been abroad," he apologized.

"Oh, I see," two rows of even, white teeth flashed a smile. "When she goes, she'll understand. You know one cannot tell it in the right colors. You need a symphony orchestra playing all the time you talk."

"I'll never go," Mrs. Jordan tapped her fingers in her determination. "Never. Dan went to Paris for the exposition, and I didn't know an easy day till he came back."

"Why?" There was a glint of amusement in the bride's eyes.

"Why?" Mrs. Jordan's voice rose to a shrill soprano. "Because he's the



*He leaned forward to drink in every syllable, every note expressed.*

father of four children that need him, and because there are too many good lives wasted now trying to meander into some one else's country."

"I adore storms," went on Mrs. Carlson. "When they all begin to pray in their staterooms, I want to get up and put on oilskins and stay on deck."

"Mrs. Jordan has not been abroad," repeated her husband stiffly.

Nat Carlson looked at his wife tenderly, the way all newly married men gaze, with the realization of possession. Then he glanced at the senior partner's wife, whose silver anniversary he had helped celebrate a few weeks ago. His eyes met Jordan's, and looked away. Jordan flushed uncomfortably.

After dinner, Mrs. Jordan excused herself with the usual flow of explanations about putting food away and seeing that things were right.

"You can't trust the best of maids," she said. "I've tried it, and I know."

"I suppose not," said Doris Carlson, without interest. "Never having kept any, I can't say. Nat engaged the two we are starting out with. They looked neat."

"Wait till one of them leaves, and then explore," a genuine interest was manifested in her voice.

"I'm not going to waste the best years of my life in the kitchen," laughed Mrs. Carlson. "I want to be able to play a sonata without having to give every finger a cold-cream plunge."

Her husband glanced at her proudly. Jordan made a note of the look. Then he turned to the old square piano, with its felt cover loaded with picture frames and a bunch of artificial roses. Nellie had played a little when she was a girl, and Alice had tried a few lessons, but given them up. There was no need of buying a piano only to have the tuner come up and see it three times a year, and it was too soon to see if little Nellie would develop any ability. The boys had clamored for a phonograph, and won out. Jordan confessed that occasionally he liked to hear some of the popular melodies wheezing away.

"I'm going to have Doris play for you," said Carlson, later in the evening. "She's a wonder."

"Foolish boy, I only drum. Do you play, Mrs. Jordan?"

"No, I haven't time. We keep the outside dusted, and that's all. The children don't seem to care for music."

"I see." The tall, graceful figure glided to the old-fashioned stool, with its embroidered doily. She struck a few chords on the asthmatic keys, and then broke into Grieg's "Butterfly." Even on the inferior instrument, it sounded strangely attractive.

"That's a beauty," said Jordan warmly, as she finished.

"It sounds hard to play," commented his wife, who had turned to her worsted work for comfort.

"Do that little German thing," Carlson urged.

She played several little German things, a bit of Wagner, apologizing to his spirit as she did so, and one or two French songs. Jordan sat enraptured, watching her long, slim fingers as they moved commandingly about the yellow keyboard, noting the rounded, supple wrists. After she finished, she slipped back to her chair and listened comprehendingly as the men talked business, politics, religion. Occasionally she interrupted with some timely comment, and once she corrected Carlson in his statistics—corrected him deservedly, too.

When they went home, she flung a daring mandarin coat around her shoulders and fastened a filmy, creamy scarf over her head. "I hate respectable wraps," she confessed, as she put her hands into Nellie's stiffly outstretched ones and told her she wanted her to come to dinner soon. "You may not get a thing to eat," she threatened. "Nat and I are at the cheese-and-kisses stage yet, but I'll play heaps of things for you, and we'll have a homey evening."

Jordan watched them walk down to the gate, down the narrow street. He saw her slight leaning on Carlson's sturdy arm, and once she rested her head for a half second on her husband's coat sleeve.

Nellie pulled down the shades and began turning out the lights. She unbuttoned the high stock collar to her silk waist and rubbed her neck in relief.

"She plays beautifully," said Jordan.

His wife turned out another jet. "I like a tune that carries," was all she answered.

A dinner at the Carlsens followed on the heels of the Jordan hospitality. Yet in the elapsing week the firm of Jordan & Carlson underwent many changes. Carlson said that it had been blessed with a new vision. His wife romped down to the office and boldly demanded fresh shades, artistic office furniture, a few good engravings for the reception room, a padded willow

chair for the stenographers to rest in, and an electric fan for the shipping clerks. She routed out the stiff wooden chairs and shiny benches; she insisted upon the walls being done in soft shades, with summery rugs to match. She talked freely with every one in the place, from the man in charge of the walks up to Dan Jordan himself. She was found at all sorts of odd hours calling for her husband and scurrying him off for a set at tennis or a tramp across the park meadow.

There was a wonderful buoyancy about her that attracted, yet commanded, as well as a semigirlish, semi-regal air that made men crowd about to do her bidding. Jordan, who stopped in at the Carlson apartment under protest one hot morning, was led into the den and made to sit down and fan himself with a Persian screen thing, while the little maid brought in cool, beaded glasses of pink stuff that quenched the thirst, yet invigorated. He completely forgot to tell Carlson that he was badly needed at the office that morning.

He found himself staring like a schoolboy in a new land. He was staring at the dainty curtains, the restful green rugs and draperies, the low bookcases packed with worn, well-selected books, at the small but excellent array of china, the one good marble, the odd bits of copper and brass which, his hostess whispered, she had hammered herself during vacation. He looked at the sturdy furniture with leather cushions and laced-leather arms. It was a wonderful surprise to him to discover that everything harmonized with everything else, that some one had thought out the tint of the wall and the hanging of even the smallest water color in the dull-silver frame. There was a bowl of pink roses on the center table, and a big bunch of sweet grass banked the empty fireplace. Unconsciously, he contrasted it with his own grate which stared at one sullenly throughout the warm months.

Doris Carlson, radiant in a white morning dress, watched them sip their punch with a delighted air. "You both looked so awfully tacky," she said,

thrusting out a white-slipped foot. "I simply couldn't let you go to the office. You'd have made ever so many mistakes."

"Play us one thing, Doris, and then we'll fly," warned her husband.

"I'll talk a song," she said. "I can't sing a note. But I love words so much that I have to find some way to make them go together—tell me how you like this."

She slipped into the big living room and began a soft, dreamy thing in a minor key. Then she said, in low, distinct tones, several stanzas of poetry, letting the music theme dominate in turn. Jordan felt again like a small boy who has successfully made the circus-tent ropes without being caught. He forgot the pink punch, the den furniture, the flowers. All he knew was that some one was saying, in vibrant, contralto music, things that his whole starved, business soul cried out to hear, things that the years of making and saving money had crowded into the background. Now it was about the sunrise, now the beauty of a storm at sea, now the little, happy moments of the brook, now the wonders of the mountains.

He set the glass down with a slight crash and leaned forward to drink in every syllable, every note expressed. His head had a curious, tight feeling, as if some one were trying hard to make him catch up with the lost years of grubbing at the office. And this woman was his partner's wife! He drew in his under lip enviously.

The song stopped, and she came to the doorway with an appealing look. "Like it?" she asked. Then she noted Jordan's expression, and a pleased smile crossed her lips. "You did like it—then I'm going to tell on myself, shall I, Nat?" There was that beautiful little deference to her husband that fitted into the masculine conception of feminine perfection. It thrilled Jordan, it revolutionized him.

"Go ahead, Doris."

"I—wrote it." She pulled the green curtains about herself prettily, dimpling as she spoke.



*"I'm ready to wilt," she announced, just as John started to tell about the talking sonatas.*

"You wrote that?" gasped Jordan.  
"Good Lord!"

Emboldened, she came into the den and perched on her husband's chair arm. "I write heaps of things, some good, some bad. I'm terribly afraid about them. I try them on people without telling. If they seem good, I let myself be vain, and take the praise. When I see they aren't so awfully worth while, I slip them away and wait until I know how to make them good. I call them talking sonatas. Like the idea?"

"It's wonderful!" Jordan managed to say.

"Ever since I was a little girl—and that was a long time ago," she confessed frankly, "I was taught to ex-

press every part of myself. I was taught to play outdoor games as well as to learn scales. I was made to speak without being self-conscious, as well as to chatter with playmates. I was taught to write little things as well as to copy writing-book exercises. My father and mother brought us all up that way. And we were pals with them as well as being their children. Since they have gone, I have realized what a big debt I owe them."

Jordan gave a long sigh. Carlson rose and kissed his wife good-by.

"I'm expecting you for dinner to-morrow," she warned, following them to the door. "Don't forget to come early, will you? Tell Mrs. Jordan I'm as nervous as a débutante over the menu." She was

like a child in her frank, demanding manner.

An hour later, the senior partner went home to lunch. It was cleaning day, and one of the children had a toothache. Nellie sat him down in the back of the dining room to a perfectly nourishing, but an undeniably un-aesthetic lunch. She was flying around with her head tied up in a white cap and a smudge of black across her cheek.

"I'm ready to wilt," she announced, just as Jordan started to tell about the talking sonatas. "I've found enough cobwebs in the spare room to keep a batch of spiders busy all summer. Now, how do you think they ever got into——"

"More tea," growled the senior partner.

"I suppose we've got to go there to dinner to-morrow?" she asked, as he stood in the doorway contemplating the weather.

"Got to go? I wouldn't miss it for worlds," he told her, almost rudely. "That woman is a wonder."

"She took her time getting settled down," commented his wife shrewdly.

"She writes," Jordan answered.

Nellie struggled with her cap strings. "I'm going to let Alice go to the seashore with the Mayers," she said, with a dash of enthusiasm; "I do love to see her have a good time."

"Why don't you have Alice learn to play—and write, and—do things?" asked Jordan suddenly.

"She's kept up with her class, hasn't she?" flashed back the mother indignantly. "I'm not the one to believe my children are wonders until some one else comes and tells me so."

It was after they came back from the little dinner that Jordan stayed downstairs, smoking long after his wife had gone to bed. At first he tried to pshaw his shadowy doubts away, and tell himself that he needed a vacation, that honeymooning was contagious. But the doubt took a tangible form. Jordan was not an imaginative man, nor given to foolish worrying. During a recent business crisis, prior to Carlson's marriage, it had been he who ate three good meals a day and laughed in the face of threatening failure.

But to-night, as he turned the student lamp lower and settled himself in the old armchair, the doubt loomed up in large, undeniable proportions; it laughed and mocked him; it whispered of daring possibilities; it told him bitter truths in hard, brutal ways. It seemed to Jordan that there was a long road—a straight, prosaic road, brown, with well-worn wagon ruts, both sides fringed with pleasant green bushes. This represented his married life—a quarter of a century of jogging peacefully along, punctuated with mild flurries, such as come into the most placid

of routines, and an occasional inevitable happening. But the road was straight, painfully so. And now there was a fork—a wide, cruel, sweeping fork—one prong of which was Nellie's, the other, his. Jordan rubbed his eyes perplexedly. He had never been prone to decide important issues with a figure of speech. Yet the forked road seemed emblazoned on his vision. He could not see where either fork led to eventually. That was hazy, indistinct. He only knew that the woman who had lived with him for twenty-five years in docile obedience, who had borne him five children, buried one, and reared four—this woman was apart from his real life. She had no place in his present love.

A guilty flush crept into his cheeks as the phrase "outgrown her" crossed his mind. It was not that Jordan was in love with Carlson's wife. The idea was so far from his horizon he could not have comprehended it. Any wild flights of fancy or unwise tangents in the direction of bright eyes and tempting lips had been done away with long before he married Nellie Blake. It was vastly different. It was a man's craving for mental companionship, intellectual stimulus, fostered by that bitterest of things—contrasting unfavorably something that is closest to you.

With all the pent-up energy of his active mind, the senior partner realized that he wanted to "know things," that his day of hard toiling was ended. The time for life's vacation was at hand—and he had no one to share it with. All the twenty-five years that Nellie had economized for him that he might be the senior partner, seemed an indefinite epoch. Past hardships lost their meaning. The memory of that contralto voice speaking poetry to the setting of Russian dance music was poignant, paramount.

Jordan had traveled little save hurried business trips. He had read still less. His religion was a cut-and-dried hereditary proceeding, his club, a political organization with one river party a year. He had never dreamed of the world of letters that waited without.

He never realized how greatly a woman can influence a man's ability in that direction. He was like some great, stupid child trying to translate Greek scrolls recently unearthed. He wanted help. He wanted—pink punch and leather-seated chairs! Strange how material, almost ridiculous details entwine themselves into the very heart of domestic tragedies.

Jordan pulled out his watch. It was past two. Nellie was asleep. He could see her thin, slightly wrinkled face in its towering nightcap lying on the pillow. A wave of disloyalty swept over him. He wondered if Carlson's wife made herself ridiculous with curl papers and huge gray flannel caps. He almost blushed as he thought of it. Remember, Jordan did not love any other woman save the one who lay sleeping upstairs. It was only that he had seen her shoved into sharp contrast and she was unable to qualify.

He picked up a paper and glanced nervously at the headlines. He felt he was committing a crime to permit such thoughts of the woman he had protected with his name.

"Divorce After Two Months of Wedded Life" met his gaze, and a sensational account of a badly messed affair followed. Jordan dropped the paper abruptly. It disgusted him. The subtle connection between the bald divorce and the unspoken thought of tiring jarred on him. Nellie was independent and she was far from stupid. She would never stay where she was not wanted. And it would not be easy to deceive her. Jordan wondered aimlessly how many homes, after the silver wedding is celebrated, contain such skeletons in the heart of either man or woman.

He rose to pace the floor. The more he thought of it, the more intensified it became. To live—and to tire! There was a world of suffering in that phrase. To see his children being brought up with their mother's outlook. His daughter, Alice—a pretty, silly thing, thinking only of entertaining other silly, pretty things, of wearing extreme clothes, and enjoying an endless round

of foolish pleasures. It was Nellie who urged it, demanded it. Little Nellie would probably be the same. There were the boys—young, dudish chaps, who stood behind their mother's skirts to ask for paternal favors. This was the result. To be sure, they were well fed and kept in health. They were obedient and well-mannered.

"But they haven't a damned bit of head," muttered Jordan grimly, recalling what Carlson's wife had told him that hot morning.

They had grown away from him. He was merely "dad," an unlimited bank account, a rather silent, ponderous person who came and went at intervals, and occasionally was treated to a few moments of their time. A new pang of lonesomeness struck him. In the course of time, they would marry and start homes of their own, or, at least, careers in which he would have no place. Who, then, was left to pass the future with? Nellie.

"I can't stand it!" Jordan told himself, as he tramped back and forth.

He reviewed Nellie's interests—the sewing circle, a little card club at which she never played, but always served, a mission class on Saturdays. He thought of the other woman's—her Browning club, her philanthropic work, her polished, brilliant circle of college friends with whom she was a leader.

It was not that Carlson's wife was a dilettante, a quasi-bohemian, with a forgetful memory and an excellent collection of smart stories. She was not an untidy, boldly original person, with little heaps of dust behind her doors, but an amount of foreign views to discuss. She was an excellent housekeeper, only she relegated it to its proper place. She was a cultured, refined woman, whose youth had been spent in attaining her qualifications—and Nellie wanted music that had a "tune to carry," and in literature selected novels with tiny-waisted heroines and Confederate-prison heroes.

He was done with romance. The sand foundation of the first chapter of marriage was slipping away, only to leave a bottomless pit yawning under-

neath. Now that they had created a home and given children to the world, their time for leisure had come, that rare leisure that spells danger to so many men and women whose youth has been spent with only a connecting link of sentimental attraction.

Jordan thought he heard Nellie stirring upstairs. He was fearful lest she come to the door and call him. The sound of her prosaic, patient voice would be unbearable to-night. He slipped upstairs softly and went into the spare room.

For a long time he lay awake, staring into the dark and wondering how, in the years to come, he might feed his starved mind with the things this other woman had suggested. How he could change his home into an artistic dwelling place, how he could shape his children's minds into seeking things worth while, how good books could replace petty gossip, fine music soothe away the lesser frets and worries, how an enlarged outlook upon life in general could substitute for the narrow, embroidered sphere in which his wife was content to bask.

The next morning at the office he found Carlson chuckling over a pile of letters Doris had given him to be stamped and posted. They were invitations to a number of working girls to take tea with her. She had some sort of alphabetical system. She was going to give them a substantial bit of refreshment, make them rest in her comfortable chairs, and play to them. She hoped they would enjoy it as much as they did the five-cent "movies."

Jordan drew a quick mental picture of Nellie and a mill girl taking tea. He threw himself into the business at hand with an added vim, and declined Carlson's invitation to lunch.

The weeks dragged on—hot, sultry, summer weeks in which Jordan found himself answering, in monosyllables, to Nellie's remarks, withdrawing shyly from his children, going off on long, lonesome auto drives in the woods, sometimes halting his machine beside a deep clump of trees and sitting lost in morbid reveries.

Nellie noted the frequent absences. Occasionally she gave a gentle hint that she would like to go, too. One time they took the Carlsons for a drive, and had dinner at a little imitation-English inn. Jordan never forgot that day. Mrs. Carlson wore a shimmery coat, with a veil to match, and she insisted on tramping in the woods to find fresh wintergreen, Solomon's seal, and wild columbine. Nellie sat in the car, looking with mournful pride at her new slippers; somehow they gave the false impression of trying to appear girlish.

Jordan noted the fact. He realized that his wife was trying to appear as attractive as her limitations permitted. But she was no longer young. Carlson's wife, though near Nellie's age, was still a charming woman with all a modern girl's dewy, fresh charms. If Carlson had married some young, chattering creature, beautiful but foolish, Jordan would have turned to the wife of his youth in relief.

Little by little the word divorce whispered itself to Jordan, suggested pleasant possibilities, promised untold lands of learning and freedom. He banished such thoughts with the chivalry of an essentially strong, good man. He told himself that Nellie had been the mother of his children, the keeper of his home, the good woman who was the fit successor to his mother. He argued the matter out bit by bit. Suppose Nellie had had an accident, and was crippled for life? Wouldn't he rush posthaste with nurses and doctors and invalid luxuries to make living a pleasure instead of a realization that she was a handicap? Wasn't this the same thing on a different plan? Nellie's mind was crippled. She had done her thinking over colic and turning carpets some years ago. His mind was virile, keenly sensitive to finding fertile ground upon which to work. Yet he was joined to the dormant mentality. And he must remember that he was an equal partner in the yoke.

The fall came with cool, refreshing, tantalizing breezes. Mrs. Carlson had "hiking" trips with her husband on Saturday afternoons; she had invented

half a dozen new chafing-dish recipes, and was beginning to emboss leather.

Jordan dropped in for an afternoon chat. He made a business memorandum the medium for so doing. He found her wrapped in a big blue apron, puzzling over a calendar-pad design.

"I like—that stuff," Jordan said awkwardly. "I wish I knew more of it."

"Do you?" she asked gently. "It's awfully good work for people. I'd be lost if I wasn't doing things all the time."

"That's because you're so wonderfully capable," the big man whispered shyly.

There was no other meaning save genuine admiration in his tone. The slender hands dropped a tool and lay passively on the blue-apron lap.

"So are you," she told him simply. "I've often thought, Mr. Jordan, that you seem to waste some of your ability. Did you never try to write—or express yourself? You seem like some huge storehouse of energy that is being neglected."

Jordan flushed. "I've never had time," he admitted slowly, "or—much encouragement. I married young. And homemaking takes dollars. I had the business to build up—and a lot of other things. I went to bed and got up with the idea of making my books balance, and outdoing our rivals. It is only lately that I—" He floundered helplessly about. It seemed black treason to mention Nellie's name in any way.

"Why don't you try now?" she urged. "It's a splendid time to start. You have lived, you know. You're not a young thing full of egotistical enthusiasm. You've simmered down until the real essence remains."

Jordan was silent. He smiled sadly, thinking of the hopeless task of telling Nellie what the "starting" was to be, of hearing her ask in patient, stupid tones why he wasn't satisfied as he was.

That night he thought over each tiny detail of the situation. He thought of the past with its dead viewpoint, of the surging, turbulent present which confused and bewildered, of the indefinite, wavering future that might hold out the

knowledge he craved or the endless rut in the straight road. The fork beckoned!

In the morning, he climbed into the attic to search among one of his old boxes. By and by he came back with a composition book with loose leaves fluttering out of it. For some reason, he did not open the book to read over his first, boyish efforts. He merely wrote a short note and placed it with the book. Then he sent it to Mrs. Nathaniel Carlson.

All day he waited guiltily to know the result. It seemed as if the blood kept mounting relentlessly into his head every time he thought of her calm, gray eyes reading those childish sentences, the first attempts of an unformed mind to express itself.

In the late afternoon, his stenographer said that Mrs. Carlson wished to see him. Jordan laid down his pen with an assumed calm and told her to show Mrs. Carlson in. He gripped the chair arms as he did so. He was quivering from the anticipation of her good-natured ridicule, her frank disapproval. Like all other novices, he had asked for an "honest opinion."

She came, holding the large envelope in her hand. "I've read them, every one," she told him abruptly, "every line."

"I may have been presumptuous," Jordan began timidly, "but after you spoke as you did, I began thinking. I remembered the—kid things that I had saved. I wondered if any line of them might tell you if it was worth while to go ahead. You said one time that writing killed lonesomeness—I'm lonesome, Mrs. Carlson."

"I read them, every one," she repeated, as she laid the envelope on his desk. "She gave up a big talent in order to be your wife."

"She?" Jordan's heavy hand unwrapped the book.

"Oh, I read your funny lines about patriotism and taming a colt," went on the woman, her gray eyes rippling with laughter. "I smiled, and thought how perfectly funny that a big, splendid business man should, even as a child,

have shown so plainly his absolutely material, matter-of-fact mind. You haven't a speck of imagination, have you? But she? She—felt. She wrote."

Jordan opened the book. Across from the dim, yellowed pages of his boy composition book were written fragmentary things in Nellie's hand. A tiny paragraph on her first baby, a little poem on the child that died, a tender bit of blank verse about the garden she made as a bride. Jordan's eyes grew moist and hot as he read. And she had taken his book to bury them in, significant of the bigger act of merging her personality into his, subduing her interests that his might be paramount.

"And this," said Carlson's wife gravely, pointing to the end.

"Good-by, little boy-and-girl book," was written in the pointed hand, and dated after their last child was born. "There are so many little feet to watch, so many little hands to care for, and always the beautiful big hands and feet which make all work blessed. I would like to write on and on, filling many books with the things which sing inside of me. But it cannot be. Little book, let me tell you a secret. We will pack you away in the attic and no one shall ever know save a stray mouse who nibbles a line or two in contentment. Little book, the reason I cannot keep writing things is because the Boy-man does not care for them, because he does not understand and does not have time for them, because he needs a very practical Nell to work and wait with him for other things. And if I should persist in writing and dreaming, the time would surely come when there would be a parting of the ways, when he would feel the difference, and shrink from loving me.

All men hesitate before they love a literary woman. Why? I don't know. I only know that here, little book, I pledge a renunciation of the bookish life—close beside his dear, clumsy sentences.



*"It's going to make all the difference in the world," he whispered.*

"He has never dreamed of this side of me. I have always kept it hidden down deep. He will never dream of it. It is going to be put to sleep, gently, surely—into a dead, heavy sleep. And, little book, I am only half sorry. Because in the years to come we will have the beauty of an equal comradeship which all the witcheries of youth can-

not bribe or buy. And so I will sleep on until that time comes!"

Jordan looked at Carlson's wife with haggard eyes. "She did that," he said brokenly, "and I never knew, I never even thought—"

"You never even asked," she finished soberly. "She put away the biggest, finest part of her to come to your level, to fit into your scheme of living. And when you have wakened and look at her askance— All the time this talent—this sacred, precious talent—lay locked in a rough schoolboy's notebook, unknown, unsought. Oh, Dan Jordan, you must make it up to her!"

"Can I?" he asked. "Has the sleep lengthened into death?"

She shook her head. "A woman who could write such brave words will waken when the right time comes. She turned away from the greater achievements to welcome economies in canning fruit and mending clothes; she refused to listen to inspiration because her ears must be tuned to catch a fretful baby's cry or your imperative voice. And you thought you—"

"It was you who showed me the difference," Jordan said brutally. "I never thought before—"

"But I never showed how I really felt," she interrupted, with a choke in her voice, "did I?"

"Felt, how?"

"I'm jealous of her," she said savagely, catching her quivering under lip. "I've been jealous of your wife since I saw her the first time. I'll die being jealous of her."

"Jealous?" Jordan's dream world was tumbling about his ears.

"Why do you suppose I play scales and tool leather and study French? Why do you think I care about odd clothes and new foods and distinctive furniture? Because that is all that is left to me. Do you think," her voice

took a deeper tone, "that I would not give my life itself to have the children your wife has, to have had them from tender baby days until now when she sees them growing into men and women? Do you think I do not mind the not having had my husband until now, not having had him as you have been hers throughout the wonderful, young years? I tell you, I have missed all that. I'm lonesome for it. I'm jealous because of it. Oh, I've had the years of study and advantages; I've learned correct English and the beauty of music without a melody, but I'd give it a thousand times to be able to look at you as your wife does—with a tired, happy wife's glance, pregnant with the associations of a lifetime!"

She turned to go. Jordan rose and touched her arm gently. "I shall thank you all my life," he said reverently. He opened the door, and she passed out without speaking.

Jordan came to his wife simply, the tattered book in his hand. She was embroidering some foolish, lavender thing with endless scallops. Jordan felt it was worthy of a place in the Normandy tapestry collection.

"Nell," he said gently, "I found this in the attic."

She gave a startled little gasp. "Dan! But it won't make any difference? It was years ago—and I've forgotten. I was very young." She had a frightened expression.

He bent to kiss the grayish hair. "It's going to make all the difference in the world," he whispered. "It is time the sleep ended."

"You think," she asked, dropping the lavender thing, "that—that—"

"I think," he answered wistfully, seeing in his mind's eye the straight, shining road, "that you must teach me many things!"



# Chest Development

By Dr. Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.



Swing the arms backward until the hands meet.

IT is a deplorable fact that the most common form of disproportion of organs in *civilized* races is found in the want of lung development, or chest capacity. This is not a natural condition; we do not see it among savages and the partially civilized. Ventilation is one of the first demands of life, if not the first; indeed, the very first gift given to us at birth is atmospheric air; and the lungs of those inhabiting cities are rarely properly ventilated or exercised. For that matter, the city dweller is not the only one who errs in this respect. A health investigation recently conducted in a rural district, to determine the source of an epidemic prevailing at the time, revealed a painful condition of over-crowded and miserably ventilated sleeping rooms in the farmhouses throughout the locality. The people were living in the most lamentable ignorance of the first laws of health. We are born with all the functions and faculties that make for health and beauty, but we abuse these gifts of nature until we can no longer lay claim to them. How superior to us are the animals in properly functioning the organs that are peculiar to themselves. For instance,

high-flying birds have larger lungs than those that remain in marshes and lowlands; their bones, too, are permeated with air cells that contain air; and this peculiarity of construction, by lightening their frame, assists their flight. Yet if they were lazy flyers, as we are lazy breathers, they would soon degenerate; their lungs would grow smaller, their bones heavier, and soon they would lose the *capacity* for flying high, just as so many of us have lost the capacity for deep breathing.

The chest contains not only the lungs, but the heart. These vital organs are interdependent: the venous blood, heavy with noxious gases, is poured by one side of the heart into the lungs, where it is aerated; that is, charged with life-saving and life-giving oxygen; it is then returned to the heart, and by it is pumped to all parts of the body. The facial sign of the lungs is, of course, the nose, since it is through the nostrils that we properly respire. Large nostrils indicate good heart and lung capacity; and where this condition exists, we are sure to find a fine, rosy complexion, bright eyes, well-rounded chest, and full throat, a buoyant and elastic step; indeed, complete aération

of blood results in such perfect health and spirits that no word picture could do justice to the delightful, sparkling personality that springs from so fine a mechanism as the human body properly attuned.

Since, therefore, ventilation is the first demand of life, it is not at all strange that there are so many weak, pale, shallow, undeveloped men and women in all communities; and many of these are so notwithstanding the fact that they live in expensive houses and are clothed in fine raiment, for these things cannot take the place of *pure air and physical exercise*. The average wage earner spends his time in ill-ventilated store or office; if he lives in a large city and must travel a distance to his employment, he does not regard this as a blessing and a means of giving himself a daily constitutional, during which he can exercise every tissue, practice deep

breathing, and so send his blood, laden with fresh air, coursing joyously through his body. Instead, he boards an already overcrowded car, where he inhales the emanations and effluvia of a half hundred or more other beings; and he pursues this method, with slight variations, throughout the day and night; in fact, his life is made up of exactly this routine. The thought of

living to *breathe* and to drink in the glorious air and golden sunshine never occurs to him; he does not live to breathe, but *breathes to live*—just enough to live—no more.

Unless, then, the blood is properly aerated—and this occurs only when the respiratory organs, the nose and lungs,

are in good condition—we simply cannot live up to our highest possibilities. The capacity for deep breathing, and for inhaling copious drafts of fresh air, is in direct ratio with our moral and mental powers. The Japanese have a divine mountain, named "Fuji Yama," which is revered by them because it represents the three stages of life. Its top is the head of man, the intellect, reaching above the clouds. The cloud region is the chest of man; here lie his most vital organs, constantly bathed in fresh, pure air; here lies the spoken word, his means of communication; centrality. This is where

a man's power lies—in his chest.

The Greeks had the highest conception of pure beauty, as revealed in their statues; but these statues are not symbolic. A statue recently executed by a French sculptor, and called "Nature Unveiled," represents a woman just unveiling her breasts. The sculptor symbolizes his idea—so rare in art—magnifying and typifying nature by the



Rod exercises bring the muscles into play.

breast, which is the noblest part of woman.

Every woman appreciates this, and longs for the possession of that symbol of beauty which stamps her as the mother of men; but firmly molded and exquisitely shaped breasts cannot develop upon a weak, narrow chest, covered with thin, flabby muscles, and containing lungs that are exercised only in their upper lobes, and then very imperfectly. The lungs really extend the full length of that bony cage we call the thorax, and years—indeed, centuries—of compression by means of tight clothing have so constricted these parts that a race has developed very far removed from the ideals of male and female beauty held by the ancient Greek. An effort is being made at present to introduce the Greek style of dress; it has already begun in the uncorseted figure, which is fashionable at the moment. It is an effort in the right direction, and would result in untold good were it pursued indefinitely; but our styles change with every season of the year, and women have no minds of their own, but are like dumb, driven cattle where clothes are concerned.

As a specimen of transcendent beauty, showing the fine development of the waist and the consequent normal contour of the entire female form, the statue of the Venus de Medici, on view at the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, is incomparable. Copies of this statue are to be found in all the academies of art throughout the world, and everywhere it is made the basis of design. It will be seen that the waist measurement of this statue almost corresponds to that of the shoulders; and yet women with poorly developed chests complain of infantile breasts. Vaucaire tonic alone will not increase the size of the breast, but enthusiasm and persistence with



Raise an imaginary object  
against resistance—  
above the head.

earnest methods will win out eventually.

The first step in the right direction is bodily poise; the spine must be straightened out, the shoulders held properly, the head erect, and the chin out. This pose assumed, the organs fall naturally into their true positions, and deep breathing may be acquired. Learn to breathe slowly, deeply, regularly, using the lobes of the lower lungs as well as the upper. With deep inhalations comes better blood, which brightens the color and gives sparkle and brilliancy to the eyes. Practice this deep breathing in unconfined cloth-

ing, and before an open window, as often during the day and night as time and opportunity afford. When this has been pursued until it is no longer an effort to fill and empty the lungs, but a pleasure, a necessity, then begin special exercises, having for their object the growth and development of the entire chest.

These exercises also include, and, indeed, must begin with, *breathing* exercises. Women with dark circles under the eyes, indicative of sluggish circulation and blood that is poorly aerated, will be greatly benefited by them.

Stand on the feet as relaxed as possible, the arms hanging at the side—chest, neck, and head erect. Inhale slowly and deeply through the nose until the abdomen is distended. Continue to inhale until the air is forced up into the apexes of the lungs. You will note now that the abdomen is contracted and the chest raised far above the normal position.

Hold for several seconds, keeping the lungs inflated to their utmost capacity—that sends messages to every part of the body; now slowly exhale through the nose, lowering the chest and then contracting the abdomen. Three min-

utes of such breathing night and morning, or only on rising, will prepare one for the day's work physically and mentally.

Breathing exercises are best taken with the eyes closed, as this affords greater concentration.

The following simple, so-called Hindu exercises are easily followed and are extremely beneficial:

Place the thumb on the left nostril, closing it; inhale slowly and deeply through the right passage. With the lungs full, close the right nostril, leaving the left open, and exhale through the left.

Second: Inhale through the left, the right being closed; exhale through the right with the left closed.

A very simple means of expanding the unused cells of the lungs is to inhale deeply through the nose, then expel the breath slowly, hissing it through the teeth until every bit of air has passed off in this manner.

No amount of gymnastics will develop the chest unless deep breathing is practiced and the unused cells of the lungs brought into active service.

#### Simple Exercises for Chest Development

It is not at all necessary to go through a lot of intricate contortions to strengthen the lungs and to improve the chest. When the habit of deep breathing has been established, one-half of the road toward the fulfillment of one's object has been traveled, and the rest of the way is easy.

Stand perfectly erect in a room flooded with fresh air; let the arms hang loosely at the sides; bring the palms together in front; now tense the muscles and chest; inhale slowly, deeply, holding the breath while the arms are swung *against resistance* backward until the palms meet. Slowly exhale, rest, and repeat.

Many may think this a very easy exercise. It is not, if properly executed. This one exercise, done under resistance, with the arms swung back

vigorously, develops the chest amazingly.

Assume the same position, with the arms hanging loosely in front and thumbs locked. Fill the lungs, and hold the air while the arms are forcibly raised above the head, an imaginary weight resting on the hands, against which resistance must be used. Slowly lower the arms into their original position while exhaling fully. This exercise pulls upon the chest muscles.

The final exercise is performed by means of a rod, cane, or smooth stick of any kind. Hold the rod as shown in the illustration, grasping it tightly with both hands. Inhale deeply; then raise the rod as high as possible, swinging it over the head and bringing it down in front. Slowly exhale, and repeat. This exercise can be varied indefinitely. After it has been mastered, raise the rod as though it were a heavy weight, and bring it forward under resistance. Also hold it over the head while holding the inhaled air in the expanded chest and silently counting three; then lower the rod, and exhale. In time the counts can be increased to five, ten, fifteen, the lungs being fully expanded all the while, and the muscles of the chest, back, shoulders, and arms brought into active play.

Exercises that benefit a flat chest will also improve a deficient bust.

Supplementary to these measures, a weak chest can be strengthened by daily douchings with cold salt water, followed by a brisk rubbing; also by the internal administration of a flesh and blood maker so frequently mentioned in these columns. Women with flat, undeveloped busts can hasten the effect of the measures outlined herein by using the Vaucaire system for bust development, regarding which full directions will gladly be furnished; but the only sure and correct means is to *build up* the chest by teaching the lungs to perform their proper function—filling every cell in these organs with pure air at each inhalation.

**Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.**



## "What Y'Doin' Now, Bill?"

You don't have to ask that question of a **trained** man, because you **know** his position is a permanent one—that he is not at the mercy of conditions that affect the **untrained** man.

You can always be sure of a good position and a good salary if you have the **special training** that keeps you in demand. The International Correspondence Schools will bring **special training** to you no matter who you are, what you do, where you live, or how little spare time or spare cash you have.

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Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X.

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Civil Engineer
Surveyor
Mail Superintendent
Mail & Miners
Locomotive Fireman & Eng.
Stationary Engineer
Textile Manufacturing
Gas Engines
Automobile Running

Civil Service
Railway Mail Clerk
Draftsman
Stenography & Typewriting
Window Trimming
Show Card Writing
Lettering & Sign Painting
Advertising
Salesman
Commercial Illustrating
Industrial Designing
Commercial Law
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English Branches
Good English for Every One
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Plumbing & Steam Fitting
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Present Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Street and No. \_\_\_\_\_

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**It is not alone the convenience, or the freshness, or the crispness, or the unusual food-value, or the digestibility, or the cleanliness, or the price, that has made Uneeda Biscuit the National Soda Cracker.**

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*Is there any gift for man or woman so acceptable, so much to be desired, or so permanently valuable as a really fine diamond?*

If you wish to confer upon anyone this most beautiful of Christmas gifts or to have for your own use the very finest grade of Blue White stone in any setting you wish, our system of selling you

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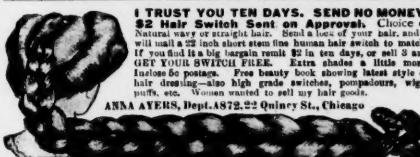
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BY Hand Setting. A diamond of Nature's wave or straight cut. Send a lock of your hair, and I will mail a 22 inch short stem fine human hair switch to match. If you find it a big bargain remit \$2 in ten days, or sell \$2 and get \$1 back. MAIL POSTAGE. Send a lock of hair, and I will enclose postage. Free beauty book showing latest style of hair dressing—also high grade switches, pompadours, wigs, puffs, etc. Women wanted to sell my hair goods.

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THE MANDY LEE INCUBATOR is more completely automatic than any other. Everything measured and regulated, heat, moisture, ventilation. Simply follow plain rules. New features for 1913. Free book free. Geo. H. Lee Co., 1266 Harney St., Omaha, Neb.

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This is only one of over forty different styles and sizes. The Premo catalog describes these all in detail as well as the daylight loading Premo Film Pack and the Premo Film Pack Tank. Premo catalog free at the dealer's, or mailed postpaid on request.

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for the one who gets a*

# P R E M O

It will be welcomed alike by a boy or girl, a man or woman, of any age.

It has the very spirit of Christmas in it—remembrance—for it enables anyone to make and keep forever, pictures of all the pleasures of Christmas day and of all the days that follow.

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**TRUSS WEARERS, Here's Great, Good News.**

*Tiresome, Tortuous Trusses Can Be Thrown Away FOREVER, And It's All Because STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the painful truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive pads, which are applied over and around an adjustment to hold the parts securely in place. NO STRAPS, BUCKLES OR SPRINGS—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or compress against the public bone. Thousands have treated themselves in the privacy of the home and conquered the most obstinate cases—no delay from work. So far as we know, no other company has ever offered such a guarantee. When weakened muscles recover there is no further use for truss.*

*Awarded Gold Medal International Exposition, Rome. Write TODAY and Grand Prix at Paris. Let us prove what we say by sending TRIAL PLAPAO FREE*

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## Improve Your Complexion, Your Figure and Your Health

Thousands of beautiful women thank Dr. James P. Campbell's Safe Arsenic Wafers for their clear, beautiful skin, their graceful figure and good health.

If your complexion needs improvement, if you are weak, nervous, thin, unshapely, tired, or in any respect not at your best, try Dr. Campbell's Wafers to-day. Used by men and women for twenty-seven years with more than satisfactory results.

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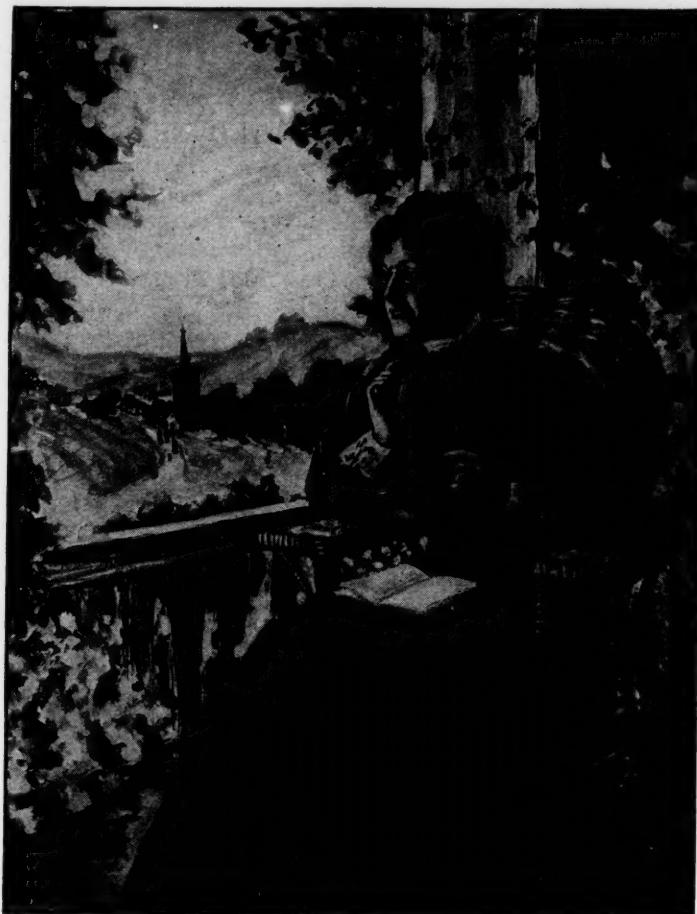
*Light Spots, Gray or Streaked  
Hair Quickly Stained to a  
Beautiful Brown.*

**Trial Bottle Sent Upon Request.**

Nothing gives a woman the appearance of age more surely than gray, streaked or faded hair. Just a touch now and then with Mrs. Potter's Walnut-Tint Hair Stain and presto! Youth has returned again.

No one would ever suspect that you stained your hair after you use this splendid preparation. It does not rub off as dyes do, and leaves the hair nice and fluffy, with a beautiful brown color.

It only takes you a few minutes once a month to apply Mrs. Potter's Walnut-Tint Hair Stain with your comb. Stains only the hair, is easily and quickly applied, and it is free from lead, sulphur, silver and all metallic compounds. Has no odor, no sediment, no grease. One bottle of Mrs. Potter's Walnut-Tint Hair Stain should last you a year. Sends for \$1.00 per bottle at first-class druggists. We guarantee satisfaction. Send your name and address, and enclose 25 cents (stamps or coin) and we will mail you, charges prepaid, a trial package, in plain, sealed wrapper, with valuable booklet on hair. Mrs. Potter's Hygienic Supply Co., 1783 Groton Bldg., Cincinnati, O.



## HEARS CHURCH BELLS AFTER LONG DEAFNESS

For the first time in years, this good lady, who has been deaf, hears the church bells. She is in ecstasy. Only this morning has she been able to hear the prattle of her grandchildren and the voice of her daughter. Twenty-three years ago she first found herself becoming deaf, and, despite numerous remedies, medical advice, hearing devices and specialists' treatment, she found it more and more difficult to hear. Of late years she was harassed by severe pain in the head, which added to her misery. At last she was told of a book which explains how to hear perfectly without costly apparatus or drugs. She got this book and learned how to quickly become freed from deafness and head-nurses. Observe her delight in this hypothetical illustration! Any reader of this publication who desires to obtain one of these books can do so free of cost by merely writing to the author, Dr. George E. Coutant, 497 A Station E, New York, N. Y. He will be pleased to mail it promptly, postpaid, to anyone whose hearing is not good. This offer will bring joy to many homes.



WHY not have a clear skin, soft white hands, a clean scalp and good hair? It is your birthright. Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment have done more to maintain the purity and beauty of the complexion, hands and hair in the last thirty-four years than all other skin preparations combined. No other emollients do so much for pimples, blackheads, red, rough skins, itching, scaly scalps, dry, thin and falling hair, chapped hands and shapeless nails as do

## Cuticura Soap and Ointment

They do even more for skin-tortured and disfigured infants and children. Besides, they satisfy in purity, delicacy and fragrance the most discriminating.

Although Cuticura Soap and Ointment are sold throughout the world, you need not buy them until you try them. A liberal sample of each with 32-page Skin Book free from nearest depot. Address Potter Drug & Chem. Corp., Dept. 33, Boston, London, Paris, Sydney, Calcutta, Bombay, Hong Kong, Tokio or Cape Town.



"Harvest"—by Vincent Aderente.



# Prosperity

There has been a bumper crop.

This is because the tillers of the soil have been industrious, and the rain and the sun have favored their plantings.

There has been industrial activity.

The makers of things in factories have been busy. They have had work to do and pay for doing it.

There has been commercial success.

The people who buy and sell and fetch and carry have been doing a lot of business and they have been paid for doing it.

The country is prosperous because all the people have been busy.

Good crops and good times can be enjoyed only when the Government maintains peace and harmony.

This task of the Government is made comparatively easy because the American

people have been enabled to become so well acquainted with each other. They know and understand one another. They are like one family.

The producer and consumer, no matter where they live, are close together.

This is largely due to our wonderful facilities for intercommunication. We excel in our railways, our mails and our telegraphs, and, most of all, in our telephones.

The Bell System has fourteen million miles of wire spread over all parts of the country. Each day there are twenty-five million telephone talks all the way from twenty feet to two thousand miles long.

The raiser of crops, the maker of things, and the man of commerce, all are helped to co-operate and work together for peace and prosperity by means of the Universal telephone.

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**Basch Money Back Guarantee**—give you absolute security against loss or dissatisfaction—a written contract to buy back any diamond and pay you the **full price in CASH** less 10% on demand; to accept any diamond we sell in exchange and allow you the full price paid, **any time!** We certify, legally the **value and CARAT WEIGHT** of every diamond! Back of this wonderful service is our entire capital and a 24 year reputation for **VALUE GUARANTEED**.

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### Marie, Postum and Jack

(A story of fiction bristling with facts)

"Yes, Postum is one of our best friends, Jack, because it made our marriage possible.

"When we first met, you remember, I was rather a sorry specimen.

"Thin, sallow and so nervous and irritable that I must have been an unpleasant nuisance to everyone.

"Then came the knowledge that coffee had broken down my nervous system and was slowly killing me.

"Within a week after the change to Postum I began to digest my food because the old poison—caffeine, in coffee—was withdrawn and my whole nervous system began to rebuild, and I grew round and comfortable. As a nervous wreck I could never hope to win you for a husband, Jack. But now all is changed and we are happy and healthy."

Nowadays Postum comes in powdered form — called

## INSTANT POSTUM

A teaspoonful stirred in hot water makes a perfect cup *instantly*.

**"There's a Reason"**

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